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THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

A NOVEL.

BY EUGENE SUE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH,

BY CHARLES H. TOWN, ESQ.

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THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAPIS-FRANC.

A **TAPIS-FRANC**, in the slang of the murderers and thieves of Paris, means a smoking-house or inn of the very lowest class. A discharged convict, who in this foul language is called an **Ogre**, or a woman of the same class who is called an **Ogresse**, commonly keeps a tavern of this kind, resorted to by the refuse of the Parisian population: liberated galley-slaves, sharpers, robbers, and assassins congregate there. If a crime has been committed, the police casts its net in this receptacle of filth, and almost always the guilty one is caught.

This opening will inform the reader that he is about to be a spectator of sorrowful and dismal scenes. If he consents, we will penetrate into horrible, unknown regions; frightful and hideous figures swarm in these foul alleys, like reptiles in a swamp. Every one has read those admirable works, in which Cooper, the American Walter Scott, has described the savage habits of the Indians, their picturesque and poetic language, and the thousand artifices by which they fly from or pursue their enemies. We have often trembled for those colonists and inhabitants of cities, when thinking that so near them lived or roamed these barbarous tribes, whose sanguinary habits remove them so far from the pale of civilization. We are about to place before our readers some episodes of the lives of other barbarians, as far removed from civilization as the savage people so well described by Cooper; only the barbarians of whom we speak live among us, and around us; we can elbow them, if we venture into the dens where they assemble to plot murder and robbery, and to divide among themselves the spoils of their victims.

These men have their own customs, women, and language: a mysterious language, crowded with wretched imagery and disgusting metaphors of blood.

Like the savages, they generally have names common among themselves; given to them either for their energy, cruelty, or some physical deformity.

We venture to describe with great diffidence some of the scenes of this story. In the first place, we fear that we shall be accused of spreading out disgusting details; and even if this is allowed, that we shall be incompetent to the task of giving a faithful, vigorous, and bold description of the manners and customs of these people.

In describing these scenes, we have almost trembled, and have hardly escaped from a ner-

vous trepidation; we will not say anxiety, for fear we may be accused of ridiculous affectation. In thinking that perhaps our readers might participate in these feelings, we have had some doubts whether we ought to persevere in our story; whether such descriptions should be placed before the public. We have had our doubts; and without the very imperious exigencies of the narrative, we should regret having placed in such a horrible quarter the commencement of our tale. We count a little, however, on that curiosity which a gloomy drama is apt to produce; and, besides, we believe in the efficacy of contrasts. In this view of the case, it is perhaps well to describe certain beings whose sombre, energetic, and perhaps crude characters, will serve as a set-off to those of a nature entirely different.

The reader, thus informed of the nature of the excursion we intend to make among the people of this infernal race, who fill our prisons and galleys, and whose blood stains our scaffolds, will perhaps follow us. Doubtless this investigation will be new for him, but we assure him that after he has put his foot on the first round of the ladder, as he mounts, and as the tale proceeds, the atmosphere will become clearer and more pure. * * * *

On the 13th of December, 1838, a cold and rainy evening, a man of athletic form, wearing a miserable *blouse* (frock), crossed the Pont au Change and plunged into the *cité*, a labyrinth of obscure, crooked, and narrow streets, which extend from the Palais de Justice to Notre Dame.

The quarter or district of the Palais de Justice, very circumscribed and well watered, is, nevertheless, the asylum or resort of the rogues of Paris. Is it not strange, or, rather, is there not a fatality, an irresistible attraction thus drawing these criminals around the formidable tribunal which condemns them to the prison the galleys, or the scaffold? On this night the wind blew in heavy gusts down the narrow streets of this gloomy district, and the pale light of the suspended lamps, shaken by the winds, was reflected in the dark stream of turbid water which flowed down the muddy streets. Wretched houses, with scarcely a window, and those of wormeaten frames, without any glass; dark, infectious-looking alleys led to still darker-looking staircases, so steep that they could only be ascended by the aid of ropes fastened to the damp walls by iron hooks; the lower stories of some of these houses were occupied by sellers of charcoal, tripe men, or venders of impure meat; and notwithstanding the little value of these commodities, the windows of the miserable shops were barred with iron, so much did the owners fear the bold robbers of this quarter.

The man of whom we have spoken, on entering the Rue aux Fèves, situated in the middle of the cité, slackened his pace considerably; he felt himself on his own ground. The night was dark, the rain fell in torrents, and sharp gusts of wind and rain beat against the walls; the clock of the Palais de Justice, in the distance, struck ten; some women, sheltered under the heavy-arched doorways (gloomy and obscure as caverns), were singing in a subdued tone some popular airs.

One of these creatures was without doubt known by the man of whom we have spoken, for he stopped suddenly before her, and seized her by the arm. The unfortunate creature drew back, and said, with a timid voice,

"Good-night, Chourineur" (in *Argot* this word means one who gives a blow with a knife).

This man had thus been called in the galleys.

"Is it thou, La Goualeuse (singer)?" said the man in the blouse; "thou must pay for my brandy, or I'll make thee dance without music."

"I have no money," said the trembling girl, for this man was much feared in the quarter.

"If thy *floche* (purse) is à jeun (empty) the *Ogresse* of the *tapis-franc* will give thee credit for thy pretty face."

"Mon Dieu! I already owe her the rent of the clothes I have on my back." "Ah! thou makest difficulties?" cried the Chourineur, giving the unfortunate wretch a random blow with his fist in the dark, which made her utter a piercing cry.

"That is nothing, my girl—it is only a warning." Hardly had he said these words when he cried, with a horrible oath, "I am hit in my arms—thou hast scratched me with thy scissiors!" and, foaming with rage, he rushed in pursuit of La Goualeuse down the dark alley.

"Come no nearer," she said, "or I'll dig thine eyes out with my scissiors; I have done nothing to thee, why hast thou struck me?" "I am going to tell thee," cried the bandit, still groping down the alley. "Ah! I've got thee, and now I'll make thee dance," he added, seizing with his immense and powerful hands a delicate and slender arm. "It is thou who shalt dance!" said a hoarse voice. "A man! is it thou, *Bras-Rouge*? Answer me, and don't squeeze so hard. I am in the entrance of thy house, it must be thou." "It is not *Bras-Rouge*," said the voice. "Good! if it is not a friend, there's blood to be shed," cried the Chourineur; "but to whom belongs this little paw that I have hold of?"

"It is the fellow of this."

Under the soft and delicate skin of the hand that now seized him quickly by the throat, the Chourineur could feel nerves and muscles of steel.

La Goualeuse, who had fled to the bottom of the alley, and mounted a few steps of the staircase, stopped a moment, and cried out to her unknown defender, "Oh! thank you, sir, for having taken my part, Chourineur struck me because I would not pay for some brandy. I revenged myself, but I did not do him much harm with my scissiors. Now I am in safety, take care of yourself. He is the *Chourineur*."

The terror that this man caused was great. "But don't you hear me! I tell you it is the

Chourineur!" repeated La Goualeuse, "and I am a *ferlampier* (bandit), who is not a *frileux* (coward)," said the unknown; then he was silent, but the noise of a deadly conflict was heard for some seconds. "Dost thou wish that I should kill thee?" cried the bandit, making a violent effort to get rid of his adversary, who he found possessed great strength. "Good, good, thou art going to pay for La Goualeuse and for thyself," he added, grinding his teeth. "Pay! in money of my fists! Yes," answered the unknown.

"If thou dost not let go my cravat, I'll bite thy nose," said the almost strangled Chourineur.

"I have too short a nose, my man, and thou doesn't see too clear."

"Come, then, under the lamp."

"Come," repeated the unknown, "and we'll look at the whites of each other's eyes;" and throwing himself on the Chourineur, whom he still held by the throat, he backed him to the entrance of the alley; then pushing him violently, he threw him into the street, hardly lighted by the wretched hanging lamp. The bandit fell, but recovering himself immediately, rushed with fury on the unknown, whose small and slender figure gave no indication of the great strength he had displayed.

The Chourineur, although of an athletic make, and very expert in that sort of pugilism which is vulgarly called *La Savatte*, found his master.

The unknown tripped up his heels, and with wonderful dexterity threw him twice.

Not yet willing to acknowledge himself conquered, the Chourineur returned to the charge foaming with rage; then the defender of La Goualeuse, changing quickly his mode of fighting, rained down on the head of the bandit a torrent of blows with his fists, which struck as if they were made of iron.

These blows with the fists, worthy the envy and admiration of Jack Turner, one of the most famous boxers of London, were so entirely out of all the rules of *La Savatte*, that the Chourineur was doubly stunned, and, for the third time, fell upon the pavement like an ox, murmuring,

"Mon linge est lavé" (*Argot* for, I have enough).

"If he gives up, have pity on him; don't kill him," said La Goualeuse, who during this conflict had advanced to the doorway of the house of *Bras Rouge*; then she added, with astonishment, "But who are you, then? Except the *Maitre d'Ecole* there is nobody, from the Rue Saint-Eloi to Notre Dame, capable of fighting the Chourineur. I thank you much, sir; alas! if it had not been for you, he would have cruelly beaten me." The unknown, instead of answering this woman, listened attentively to her voice.

Never had a sound more sweet, more silvery, more soft, reached his ears; he endeavoured to catch a glimpse of her face, but the night was too dark, the light from the lamp too feeble.

After having remained some minutes immovable, the Chourineur raised himself and sat up.

"Take care!" said La Goualeuse, retreating into the alley, and drawing her protector by the arm; "take care! perhaps he will try to revenge himself."

"Be quiet, my girl; if he wants any more, I am ready to serve him."

The brigand heard these words. "I have the *coloquinte en bringues*," said he; "for to-day I have enough; won't have any more; another time, I say nothing—if I meet you."

"Art thou not content? art thou complaining?" cried the unknown, with a menacing voice. "Is it that I have *macaroné*?" (fought in a foul manner).

"No, no, I don't complain; thou art an *atout*" (trump), said the brigand, in a peevish tone, but with that sort of respect which physical force always inspires in people of that class; "thou hast rinsed me, and except the *Maitre d'Ecole*, who can eat three Herculeses for breakfast, no one to this hour has put his foot on my head."

"Well! what then?"

"What then? why, I have found my master, that's all: you will find yours one of these days; sooner or later every one finds his—if it is not man, why there is the *Meg des Megs* (God), as the *sangliers* (priests) say—that which is sure is, that now thou hast put the Chourineur under thy feet, thou canst do as thou pleasest in the cité. All the women will be thy slaves; Ogres and Ogresses will not dare to refuse to give thee credit." "Who art thou, then? thou *dévides la jarg* (speakest Argot) like papa and mamma! If thou art *grinche* (a robber), I am not thy man." "I have *chouriné* (given blows with a knife), it is true, because when my blood rushes to my head I always see red, and I must strike. But I have paid for my *chourinades* in going fifteen years to the *pré* (galleys). I finished my time. I owe nothing to the *curieux* (judges), and I have never *grinchi*; thou mayest ask La Goualeuse!"

"It is true; he is not a robber," said the latter.

"Well, come and take a glass of brandy with me, and we shall become acquainted," said the unknown. "Come, let's have no ill feeling."

"Now that is genteel—thou art my master, I own it—thou knowest how to play with fists; those last blows came down like a hailstorm. Thunder! how they poured on my scone—never have felt anything like it—just like a blacksmith's hammer—a new game, I guess—thou must teach me."

"I'll begin as soon as thou wilt."

"Not with me—not with me—I feel yet a little dizzy; but thou must know Bras-Rouge, as thou wast in the alley of his house."

"Bras-Rouge?" said the unknown, surprised at this question; "does nobody but Bras-Rouge live in this house?"

"Yes, my man. Bras-Rouge has his own reasons for not desiring neighbours," said the Chourineur, smiling in a significant manner.

"Well! so much the better for mine," said the unknown, who seemed desirous of putting a stop to the conversation. I don't know *Bras-Rouge* any more than I know *Bras Noir*; it rained hard, and I stepped into the alley for shelter: thou wast beating this poor girl, and I beat thee, that's all."

"Just so; besides, I don't want to know anything of thine affairs; those who stand in need of the services of Bras-Rouge don't tell it to all Rome: don't say any more about it:" then turning to La Goualeuse, he said, "On my

faith, thou art a good girl. I gave thee a on the head, and thou gavest me a punch scissors; it was only in fun: but what really kind on your part, was that thou did not wish that madman there to thrash me: I cried enough. Thou shalt come and d with us; this gentleman pays! By-the my man, instead of going to drink, suppose go and sup at the *Lapin Blanc*: it is a ti franc." "Agreed; I'll pay for supper."

thou come, La Goualeuse!" said the unkno

"Oh! I was very hungry," she answered, "but this fight has made me heart-sick; I I no more appetite."

"Bah, bah! that 'll come when once at table; besides, the cooking at the *Lapin B* is first-rate." The three individuals, now the most friendly footing, turned their steps towards the tavern.

During the whole time of the conflict between the unknown and the Chourineur, a c man of gigantic stature, concealed in an alley, had watched with anxiety the char of the combat, without having lent (as has t seen) the least assistance to either of the versaries; and when the trio started for tapis-franc, the coalman followed them.

The bandit and La Goualeuse entered fi the unknown was about following, when coal-merchant approached, and whispered i most respectful tone, in English, "My loi take care!"

The unknown shrugged his shoulders joined his companions. The coalman hove near the door, listening with great attent and from time to time peeping through a si hole of the wretched window, which, as is u in these dens, was thickly incrustated with w paint on the inside.

CHAPTER II.

THE OGRESSA.

THE tavern of the *Lapin Blanc* is situat about half way down the street aux Fèves occupies the lower story of a lofty house v two large windows, called à *guillotine*. At the door of a dark vaulted alley was suspens an oblong, cracked lantern, on which was pained in red letters, "*Here lodgings can be had the night.*"

Chourineur, Goualeuse, and the unkno entered the tavern.

It was a long, low room, into which they fered, with smoky ceiling and black raft badly lighted by the murky rays of a misera lamp. The whitewashed walls were cove with vulgar sketches, or with sentences in got (slang); the floor of beaten earth and was covered with mud; an armful of st was placed at the foot of the counter or bar the *Ogresse* instead of a carpet, and this v situated near the door, and under the lamp each side of this room there was placed six bles, one end of each, as well as the bench nailed to the wall; at the farther end of room a door opened into the kitchen; on right, near the bar, another gave an exit i the alley, which led to miserable appartment where one can lodge for three sous the nigh and now a few words about the *Ogresse* e her guests.

She was called the mother *Pomise*, and her threefold employment was, to keep the tavern, take in lodgers by the night, and to rent out clothes to the miserable beings who swarm in these foul streets.

The Ogresse was about forty years of age, tall, robust, and corpulent, with a red face and something of a beard; her rough and masculine voice, her immense arms and large hands, all indicated no common strength; her hat was trimmed with a faded red and yellow riband; a tippet of rabbit skin was crossed on her bosom, and tied behind her back; her dress of green woollen so short, that her black sabots (wooden shoes) were seen, half burned by her foot-stove; and, finally, her copper-coloured complexion, much inflamed by the abuse of strong drink.

The counter, lined with lead, was furnished with jugs with iron hoops, and different-sized measures of tin; on a small shelf could be seen many glass flacons, moulded in the form of the emperor: these bottles were filled with adulterated liquors of a rose and green colour, known by the name of *parfait amour* and *consolation*; finally, a large black cat, with yellow eyes, crouched near the Ogresse, seemed the familiar spirit of this place.

By a contrast that almost seems impossible, if we did not know that the human breast is an impenetrable abyss—a holy Easter branch, bought at the church by the Ogresse, was placed behind the box of an ancient cuckoo clock. Two men, with sinister looks, bristling beards, and clothed almost in rags, had hardly touched the jug of wine that had been served to them, but were whispering, evidently, in an unquiet and uneasy manner.

One of them especially, who was very pale, almost livid, kept continually drawing his wretched Greek cap over his eyes. He held his left hand concealed, never using it except when compelled by necessity. At a short distance was seated a young man of hardly sixteen years, with a drunken, pale, and livid look; his long, black hair floated on his shoulders, smoking a short white pipe; this youth was a fine specimen of juvenile precocity. He was leaning against the wall, with his hands in the pockets of his blouse, and he never took the pipe from his mouth except to drink of the brandy which stood before him. The other inmates of the tapis-franc, male or female, deserve no particular notice; their physiognomies were ferocious or dull, their gayety gross or licentious, their silence sombre or stupid: such were the guests of the tapis-franc, where the unknown, the Chourineur, and La Goualeuse entered. These three last personages play so important a part in our story, that we should not fail to place them in bold relief.

The Chourineur was a man of tall stature, athletic make, with flax-coloured hair, almost white, heavy dark eyebrows, and enormous whiskers of burning red. Poverty, the rude labour at the galleys in the scorching sun, had bronzed his skin to that dark olive, which may be said to be peculiar to galley-slaves; notwithstanding his terrible name, the features of this man intimated a more brutal audacity than ferocity, although the back part of his head, most singularly developed, announced the preponder-

ance of carnal and murderous appetites. The Chourineur was dressed in a miserable blouse trousers of velveteen, which formerly had been green, but no colour could now be distinguished, from the heavy coating of mud.

By a strange anomaly, the face of La Goualeuse presented one of those angelic and lovely expressions which preserve their ideality even in the midst of depravity, as if the creature were unable to efface by its vices the noble stamp which God has placed on the forehead of some privileged beings.

The Goualeuse had passed her sixteenth year. Her round, white forehead, surmounted her visage of a most perfect oval; her long and almost curling eyelashes half concealed her large, blue eyes; her small, rosy mouth, and Grecian nose, her dimpled chin, and dowdy cheek, were lovely in the extreme; from each side of her lofty temples a tress of pale auburn hair descended low on her cheek, then passing behind the small ear of ivory, was fastened under a sort of blue checked handkerchief which she wore upon her head, tied, as is vulgarly called, *à la Marmotte*. A string of coral beads encircled her beautiful throat, of most dazzling whiteness; her dress, of blue stuff, was much too large, and scarcely concealed her round and elastic form; a miserable little orange shawl, with blue fringe, crossed on her bosom, completed her attire. The charming voice of La Goualeuse had attracted the attention of her unknown defender; in effect, this voice, so sweet and harmonious, had such an irresistible attraction, that the crowd of miserable wretches, in the midst of whom she lived, often begged her to sing, and in listening to her touching notes, had surnamed her *La Goualeuse* (singer).

She had also received another name, due, no doubt, to the innocent expression of her face; they called her *Fleur de Marie*, which in Argot (slang) means virgin.

We wish we could convey to the reader the singular impression made upon us when, in the midst of this vocabulary, redolent with words of blood, and murder, and theft, we came to this one so poetical, so metaphorical, so religious. *Fleur de Marie*—is it not like a lily rearing its snow-white head on a field of carnage? Singular contrast, strange chance! the inventors of this frightful language have dared to look up to a holy poesy—they have added another charm to the words which they wish to express.

These reflections, do they not lead us to believe, in thinking also of other contrasts, which break the horrible monotony of the most criminal existences, that certain principles of piety and morality, innate, as it were, cast here and there their sparkling light on some dark, gloomy mind? Malefactors all of one description are phenomena sufficiently rare.

The unknown defender of La Goualeuse (we shall call him *Rodolphe*) was about thirty years of age, and of a middling size; his slight and perfectly-proportioned figure gave no indication of the great strength which he had shown in his contest with the Chourineur. It had been difficult to assign any certain character to the physiognomy of *Rodolphe*—it united the strangest contrasts; his features were regularly handsome, too handsome for a man; his delicately-pale complexion, his large brown

eyes, almost always half closed, his loathing gait, his ironical smile, seemed to announce a dissipated man, whose constitution was, as yet, only weakened by the aristocratic excesses of opulent life. Yet, notwithstanding his white and delicate hands, Rodolphe had just knocked down one of the most robust and renowned bandits of this resort of robbers.

We say aristocratic excess, because the intoxication proceeding from, or caused by, generous wine, is very different from that caused by a miserable adulterated drink; because, in a word, to the eyes of an observer, an excess differs as much in symptoms as in kind and species.

Certain furrows on the brow of Rodolphe revealed profound thought, essentially a contemplative man; yet the firmness of the contour of his mouth, his carriage of the head, somewhat bold and imperious, betrayed the man of action, whose physical force and courage would always exercise on the multitude an irresistible ascendancy. Often his look seemed charged with a melancholy sadness, and all that commiseration has the most helpful, all that pity has the most touching, was pictured on his countenance; at other times, on the contrary, the expression of Rodolphe became hard and wicked; his features expressed so much disdain and cruelty, that one could scarcely believe they could ever be susceptible of any gentle emotion. The continuation of this story will show what was capable of calling forth passions and feelings so opposite in their nature.

In his conflict with the Chourineur, Rodolphe had shown neither anger nor hatred against an adversary so unworthy. Confiding in his strength, in his address, in his agility, he had experienced no emotion but that of contempt for the sort of brute he threw on the ground. To finish the portrait of Rodolphe, we will say that his hair was of clear chestnut, as were his nobly-arched eyebrows; he wore a fine silken mustache, and his chin, a little prominent, was most carefully shaved; otherwise, the manners and language he used, or rather affected to use, with incredible ease, gave him a complete resemblance to the guests of the Ogresse. His symmetrical neck, modelled like an Indian Bacchus, was encompassed by a black cravat, negligently tied, with the ends falling on the bosom of his blouse, whose faded colour announced its antiquity; his shoes were nailed with a double row of nails, and, save his hands of dazzling whiteness, nothing in his dress distinguished him from the other inmates; while his air of resolution, and, if we may so express it, his audacious serenity, placed between him and them an immeasurable distance.

On entering the tapis-franc, the Chourineur, placing one of his large hairy hands on the shoulder of Rodolphe, cried,

"A greeting for the Chourineur's master."

"Yes, friends, this young man has just been sousing me; fair notice to those who have any desire to have their skulls cracked or backs broken, including also the Maitre d'Ecole, who this time will find his master, I'll answer for it. I'll bet."

At these words, from the Ogresse to the very least of the inmates of the tapis-franc, all eyes were turned towards the conqueror of the

Chourineur, with cowardly respect. Some of them drawing their jugs to the end of their tables, made room for Rodolphe if he might wish to seat himself, while others gathered around the Chourineur to learn some details of the unknown, who had just made such a victorious debut into their society. Even the Ogresse herself smiled most graciously on Rodolphe; and, a thing unheard of in the annals of the tapis-franc, even raised herself from her place at the bar, and came to ask Rodolphe what she should serve to him and his company, an attention she had never paid even to the Maitre d'Ecole, that famous villain who had made even the Chourineur tremble.

One of the two men whom we have mentioned, he who kept his hand so carefully concealed, leaned over towards the Ogresse as she wiped the table for Rodolphe, and said, in a hoarse voice,

"Has the Maitre d'Ecole been here to-day?"

"No," said Mother Ponisse.

"Yesterday?" "Yes, he came." "With his new wife?" "Bah! do you take me for a spy, with your questionings! do you think I am going to denounce my guests?" said the Ogresse, in a brutal manner.

"I have a rendezvous with the Maitre d'Ecole this night; we have some business together."

"That must be something very nice, your affairs, assassins as you are!"

"Assassins!" said the irritated bandit; "it is from them you make your living!"

"Come, come, will you hold your tongue?" cried the Ogresse, "or I'll throw this jug at your head."

The cowardly wretch sat down, growling.

Fleur de Marie, as she came in, had exchanged a look of friendly intelligence with the young man we have mentioned.

The Chourineur said to him, "Ah! Barbillon, always drinking brandy!"

"Always. I'd rather fast and wear old shoes, than go without brandy in my throat and tobacco in my pipe," said the young man in a cracked voice, without changing his position, and passing out volumes of smoke.

"Good-evening, Mother Ponisse," said La Gouzeuse.

"Good-evening, Fleur de Marie," answered the Ogresse, inspecting closely the vestments which covered the unfortunate; "ah, it is a pleasure to rent one's things to you. You are a neat little puss. I never would have let such a fine orange shawl to such creatures as La Tourneuse or the Tête de Mort. But I have taken good care of you since you came from prison, and I must confess you are the best creature in all the cité."

"Hollo, mother!" said Rodolphe, "I see you have got some holy wood on your clock," pointing with his finger to the Easter Bough, placed behind the cuckoo.

"Well, and would you have one live like heathen?" answered the horrible woman; and then speaking to La Gouzeuse, "Come, won't you give us one of your songs?" "After supper, Mother Ponisse," said the Chourineur. "And what will you have, my good fellow?" said she to Rodolphe, desiring to make him welcome, so that she might count upon his assistance when required.

"Ask the Chourineur, mother; it is his feast, but I pay."

"Well, what do you want for supper?" said the Ogresse, turning to the bandit, "what do you want, wicked dog?"

"Two measures of wine at 12 sous, three small loaves of fresh bread, and a harlequin (a mixture of broken victuals)," cried the Chourineur, after having hesitated a while.

"I see that you are a famous drinker, and have a great passion for harlequins."

"Well, and are you hungry now?" said the Chourineur to La Goualeuse; "are you hungry?"

"Now! Chourineur."

"Do you like anything better than a harlequin, my girl?" said Rodolphe.

"Oh no! my hunger is all gone."

"But why don't you look at my master?" said the Chourineur, with a coarse laugh, and pointing at Rodolphe with his finger: "why don't you look at him?" The Goualeuse blushed, and cast down her eyes without answering.

After a short time, the Ogresse came herself, and placed on the table of Rodolphe a jug of wine, some bread, and the harlequin, which we shall not attempt to describe to our readers, but which the Chourineur seemed to find perfectly to his taste, for he cried,

"What a dish! ye gods! what a dish! it is like an omnibus! there is something for all tastes; for those who like fat and those who like lean; for those who like pepper and those who like sugar—chickens' legs and fishes' tails, cutlet's bones and pie crust, a fry, omelette, vegetables, birds' heads, crackers, and salad—now do eat, La Goualeuse, it is choice—have you been feasting to-day?" "Feasting! ah yes; I have eaten; as usual, this morning my penny's-worth of bread and milk."

The entrance of a new-comer into the tavern interrupted all conversation, and attracted all attention. He was a man of about middle age, strong and robust, wearing a jacket and cap, perfectly conversant with the usages of the tapis-franc, and speaking in Argot; he demanded some supper.

Although this stranger was not a regular loungee at the tapis-franc, he now attracted no more attention, for he was known. To recognise these fellows, robbers, like honest men, rarely fail.

The new-comer placed himself in such a position that he might observe the two men of whom we have spoken: he scarcely took his eyes from off them; but they were so placed, that they could not see that they were watched.

Notwithstanding his audacity, the Chourineur showed much deference to Rodolphe, and did not dare to *tutoyer* (address him familiarly). This man had no respect for the laws, but he respected physical strength. "On the faith of man," he said, "although you have made me dance, yet I am glad I have met you." "Because you find the harlequin to your taste?" "In the first place; and then I search to see you handle the Maitre d'Ecole; he has always rinsed me, and I want to see him washed in return; oh, that will do me good."

"Ah, ah! do you think I am going to jump on the Maitre d'Ecole like a bulldog, just to amuse you?" "No, but he will jump on you,

as soon as he hears that you are stronger than he," answered the Chourineur, rubbing his hands. "I have money enough left to give him his change," said Rodolphe, carelessly; "but what horrid weather; suppose we have some brandy and sugar; perhaps it will make La Goualeuse find her voice." "Agreed," said the Chourineur; "and to become acquainted, we'll just say who we are," added Rodolphe.

"White Hair, nicknamed the Chourineur, liberated galley-slave, workman among the floating woods at the *Quai Saint Paul*—frozen during the winter, roasted in summer—behold my character," said the guest of Rodolphe, making the military salute with his left hand. "And you, my master, this is the first time I have seen you in the cité. I don't mean to reproach you, but you have entered marching on my scull and beating the drum on my hide. Thunder and lightning, what music! above all, those last touches, just as you finished. I can't help thinking about it; I guess you tried to exel. But have you no other trade but that of rinsing the Chourineur?"

"I am a painter of fans, and I am called Rodolphe." "Painter of fans! ah! that is the reason your hands are so white," said the Chourineur. "Never mind, if all your workmen are like you, it appears that your trade requires a great deal of strength. But since you are a workman, and an honest one, I don't doubt, why do you come to a tapis-franc, where you will only meet thieves and robbers, or a liberated galley-slave like me, who can't go anywhere else?"

"I come here because I like good society."

"Hum! hum!" cried the Chourineur, shaking his head, with an air of doubt. "I found you in the alley of Bras-Rouge; enough—sufficient. You say you don't know him?"

"I want to know if you are going to talk any more to me of your Bras-Rouge, whom the devil confound, that is, if his majesty pleases!"

"Hold, master; you are a little suspicious of me, and you are not wrong; but if you wish, I'll tell you my history, on condition that you will teach me how to strike those blows which made me smell brimstone."

"I consent, Chourineur; you shall tell me your story, and then La Goualeuse shall tell hers."

"Agreed," answered the Chourineur. "The weather is too bad even to put a constable out of doors—that'll amuse us. Are you agreed, La Goualeuse?"

"Oh yes! but it will not take me long," said Fleur de Marie. "And you will tell us yours, comrade Rodolphe?" added the Chourineur. "Yes, I'll begin." "Painter of fans!" said La Goualeuse; "it is a nice trade." "And how much do you gain at such a break-back calling as that?" said the Chourineur. "I'll begin my story," answered Rodolphe. "My best day's work brings me in four francs, sometimes five, during the long days of summer." "And do you stroll about much, *guzard*?" "Yes, as long as I have money. In the first place, I pay six sous for my bed."

"Pardon me, *my lord*—you pay six sous for your lodging!" said the Chourineur, touching his cap.

This word, *my lord*—ironically used by the

bandit, caused Rodolphe to smile imperceptibly. He continued: "Oh, I like to be comfortable and neat." "Here's a peer of France, a banker, a millionaire," cried the Chourineur; "he lodges for six sous!" "Added to that," said Rodolphe, "four sous for tobacco, that makes ten; four sous for breakfast, fourteen; fifteen for dinner, one or two for brandy, makes about thirty sous a day." "I have no need to work all the day; the rest of the time I frolic."

"And your family?" said La Goualeuse.

"Dead, during the cholera," answered Rodolphe. "What trade did they follow?" asked La Goualeuse. "Old clothes merchants, under the market, dealers in rags." "And how much did you get for their stock?" said the Chourineur.

"I was too young—my guardian sold it; when I came of age, he gave me thirty francs—my sole heritage."

"Who is your master at present?" asked the Chourineur.

"My master! he is called Borel, and lives in the Rue des Bourdonnais; a fool, but a brute; robber, but a miser; he'd rather lose an eye than pay his workmen; there's his description; if he should be lost let him be lost; don't bring him back to his shop. I have been bound to him since I was fifteen; I drew a lucky number at the Conscription; I live in the Rue de la Juiverie, No. 4, first floor in front; I am called Rodolphe Durand; so now you have my history."

"Now your turn, La Goualeuse," said the Chourineur; "I'll reserve my story for the dessert (*la bonne bouche*)."

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF LA GOUALEUSE.

"Let us begin at the beginning," said the Chourineur. "Yes; your parents?" added Rodolphe. "I never knew them," said Fleur de Marie. "Ah, bah!" observed the Chourineur; "neither seen nor known; born under a cabbage, as we say to children; quite droll, I declare, La Goualeuse! we belong to the same family." "You also, Chourineur?" "Yes, a foundling of the streets of Paris, just like you, my dear." "And who brought you up, La Goualeuse?" asked Rodolphe. "I don't know. The farthest back I can recollect was when I was about seven years old; I was with an old borgnesse (one-eyed woman) who was nicknamed *La Chouette* (owl), because she had a hooked nose, one round green eye, and because she resembled an owl with one eye torn out."

"Ha! ha! ha! I can see her now, *La Chouette*!" cried the Chourineur, laughing. "*La Borgnesse*," continued Fleur de Marie, made me sell barley-sugar, every evening, on the Pont Neuf; it was a way to ask alms; if, on returning, I did not bring with me ten sous at least, *La Chouette* always beat me, instead of giving me my supper." "I understand, my dear," said the Chourineur, "a kick instead of bread, with a box on the ear for butter." "Oh! mon Dieu, yes." "Are you sure that this woman was not your mother?" asked Rodolphe.

"I am very sure, for *La Chouette* often proached me for having neither father nor mother: she said she had picked me up in the street." "Thus," said the Chourineur, "dined for your supper, when you came home without ten sous?" "Add a glass of wine, and then I was sent shivering to rest on a heap of straw—mon Dieu! straw is common thought to be very warm: oh! it is a take." "Straw!" cried the Chourineur, "are-right, my dear; I'd as soon sleep on a manure heap is ten times better! but the worms turn up its nose at this, and says its too and vulgar—only fit for the *canaille*." "The pleasantry caused Fleur de Marie to smile," she continued, "The next morning the *Borgnesse* gave me the same food for breakfast she did for supper, and then sent me to *Monfaucon*, to dig for worms; for during the time she kept a shop for fishing-lines, under the *Neuf*. For a child of seven years, half starved with cold and hunger, it is a long way, from the Rue de la Mortellerie to *Monfaucon*." "The exercise has made you straight as an arrow; mustn't complain of that," said the Chourineur, striking a light on his pipe. "At length I'd return, almost broken, with my basket filled with worms; then, at noon, *La Chouette* gave me a piece of bread, and I did not leave a crumb to assure you." "Not to have eaten would have made your shape like a wasp," said the Chourineur; "mustn't complain of that, my dear (puffing out volumes of smoke). "But with the matter, comrade! no, I mean to say *Monfaucon*! you look sad: is it because the poor girl has lived in misery? hold, we must have had enough of it!" "Oh! you have never been as miserable and wretched as I, Chourineur," said Fleur de Marie.

"I, Goualeuse! you were like a queen compared to me, my dear; when you were young you had at least straw and bread; while I was in the plaster-kilns of Clichy, like a vagabond and refreshed myself with cabbage-leaves picked from the gutters; but often, when I found it too far to go to the kilns, I slept on big stones of the Louvre. In winter, I was white sheets, when it snowed."

"Ah! but a man is more hardy than a child," said Fleur de Marie; "a poor little creature with no more strength than a bird." "You remember that, then?"

"I think so; for when *La Chouette* struck I always fell at the first blow; then she would trample on me, crying, 'This little *gousse* has more strength than a cat; she can't stand a single cuff'; then she called me *La Pegriole*—no other name—it was my baptism." "I like me; I have always been called *Li* stray dog, whose name is not known, 'Ha! Thing!' 'Whitehead!' It is quite astonishing how much our stories are alike," said Chourineur.

"True," cried Fleur de Marie, addressing herself always to this man; seeming to feel of shame in the presence of Rodolphe, to she hardly dared to lift her eyes, although appeared to belong to the class of persons whom she habitually associated. "And you brought the worms, what did you ask the Chourineur."

"La Borgnesse sent me to beg in the neighbourhood until night, when she went to sell fries (a sort of fry) on the Pont-Neuf. Marry! that hour my piece of bread was far enough; and if I complained of hunger to La Chouette, she'd beat me, saying, 'Go and make your sons, Pagriotte, and then you shall have pepper;' then, as I was very hungry, and she said, 'I would cry bitterly. Placing me on the Pont-Neuf, with my little stand of barley-sugar, La Borgnesse left me. Oh! how I wept and shivered with cold and hunger!"

"Always just like me, my dear," said the Chourineur, interrupting La Goualeuse; "it can hardly be believed, yet hunger makes one shake much as cold." "Thus I remained on the Pont-Neuf until eleven o'clock at night, always weeping; often the passers-by, seeing me weep, would give me as much as ten, sometimes fifteen sous, which I gave to La Chouette."

"A fine night's work for a little bird!"

"Yes; but the Borgnesse, seeing this—"

"With one eye!" said the Chourineur, laugh-

ing. "With one eye, as you say, since she only had one; seeing this, she always took good care to give me a beating before she placed me on the Pont-Neuf, that I might excite compassion by my tears, and thus augment my receipts." "That wasn't so stupid!"

"Yes, you think so, Chourineur. I became accustomed to the blows; and, seeing that La Chouette was always enraged when I did not weep, to revenge myself, the more she beat me, the more I laughed; and in the evening, instead of sobbing when I sold my barley-sugar, I sung a lark, although I hardly had the heart to sing." "But tell me—barley-sugar; had you ever any desire to taste them, my poor Goualeuse?"

"Oh, I guess so, Chourineur! but I had never tasted them; it was my great desire. And it is this desire that ruined me; you shall know why. One day, returning with my wares, the boys beat me, and stole my basket. I returned. I knew what I had to expect: I received my beating, and no bread. At night, La Borgnesse, before we went to the bridge, reproached me in my conduct the night before, and told me in the way of weeping, tore my hair out in handfuls just about the temples, where it is most painful."

"Thunder and lightning! that was too much!" cried the bandit, striking his fist on the table, and knitting his brows; "whip a child, well enough! but to tear out hair! too much! too much!"

Rodolphe, who had attentively listened to the tale of Fleur de Marie, looked at the Chourineur with astonishment; this burst of sensibility surprised him. "What is the matter, Chourineur?" said he. "What is the matter? it is the matter! how! are you not horrified at this story! that monster of a Chouette, who so ill treated this poor child! You are, as hard-hearted as your fists!" "Confound your girl," said Rodolphe, without replying to the interpolation of the Chourineur.

As I told you, La Chouette tortured me to weep; it only gave me resolution to do her mad; I began to laugh, and I went to the bridge with my barley-sugar. La

Borgnesse was at her store; and from time to time she shook her fist at me. Then, instead of weeping, I sang louder and louder; but oh! I was very hungry, so hungry! for six months that I had sold barley-sugar, I had never tasted one; but that night, as much to enrage her as for my hunger, I tasted one."

"Bravo! my dear!" "I tasted two." "Bravo! Vive la charite!" "Marry! I found it very good when an orange woman cried out to La Borgnesse, 'I say, La Chouette, look! look! Pagriotte is eating your stock!'"

"Oh thunder! we are going to have warm work," said the Chourineur, singularly interested. "Poor little mouse, how it must have trembled when La Chouette saw it, eh!"

"How did you get out of the scrape, my poor Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe, as much interested as the Chourineur.

"Ah, marry! that was rather difficult; only what was very droll," added Fleur de Marie, laughing, "was, that La Borgnesse, notwithstanding her rage, could not leave her store; for the future was frying famously."

"Ha! ha! ha! true; rather a difficult position," said the Chourineur, shouting with laughter. After having partaken of the hilarity of the bandit, Fleur de Marie continued:

"Ma foi! thinking of the blows I should receive, I thought I might as well be whipped for three as for one; so I took a third, and, as La Chouette shook her iron fork at me, as true as you see that plate, I took the barley-sugar and sucked it under her nose." "Bravo! my dear! I can now explain the blow you gave me with your scissors. You are a trump—but La Chouette must have slaughtered you after that."

"Her cooking finished, she came to me. I had received three sous for alms, and I had eaten the value of six. When she took me by the hand, I thought I should have fallen to the ground, I was so frightened; I remember it as well as if it were yesterday, for it was just about the holidays. You know there are always shops of toys on the Pont-Neuf; all the evening I had had glimpses of them; nothing else to do but to look at all the pretty dolls and playthings. You may think for a child—" "Ah! had you ever any toys, Goualeuse?" said the Chourineur.

"I—am you foolish! go along! who would have given them to me! However to proceed, although in the dead of winter, I had nothing on but a miserable, ragged frock of muslin, with neither shoes nor stockings, and sabots on my feet! One was not likely to be smothered in that attire, eh? Well, when La Borgnesse took me by the hand, I became all in a perspiration. That which alarmed me the most was, that, instead of cursing and swearing, La Chouette did nothing but mutter all the way home. She never let go her clatch, but walked so fast that I was obliged to run to keep up with her. In running I lost one of my sabots, and I dared not to tell her, so that when we arrived my foot was covered with blood."

"The whelp of a Borgnesse!" cried the Chourineur, in a rage, striking anew on the table. "That gives me a strange sensation, to think of this poor child, running after the old she-devil, with her little bloody foot." "We roosted in a granary of the Rue de la Mortellerie; near the entrance of the alley there was a tavern;

La Chouette stepped in, still holding me by the hand, and drank a pint of brandy."

"Morbieu! I could not drink it myself without being as drunk as an owl."

"It was the usual potion of La Borgnesse; thus she always went to bed drunk; on this account, perhaps, she beat me so much; however, we clambered up to our loft; I wasn't at a merry-making, I promise you; La Chouette shut the door, and double locked it; I fell upon my knees, and begged her pardon for having stolen the barley-sugar. She made no answer, but marching up and down the room, muttered between her teeth, 'What shall I do to her to-night—this Pegriotte, this thief of barley-sugar! come, what shall I do with her?' and then she would stop and look at me with her green eye, as I remained always on my knees. Suddenly she went to a shelf, and took thence a pair of pincers—" "Pincers!" cried the Chourineur. "Yes! pincers." "For what use? to strike thee?" said Rodolphe. "To pinch you?" said the Chourineur. "Ah! yes." "To tear out your hair?" "Can't you guess? will you give up?" "Yes, yes." "Well, then, it was to draw one of my teeth."

The Chourineur uttered such a dreadful imprecation, that all the inmates of the tapis-franc regarded him with astonishment. "Well, what ails you?" said La Goualeuse. "What ails me? why, I'd assassinate her, if I had her! La Borgnesse! Where is she? tell me! where is she? if I find her, I'll murder her!" The eyes of the bandit were as red as blood. Rodolphe had partaken of the horror of the Chourineur at the cruelty of the Borgnesse; but he could not help wondering how an assassin could work himself into such a fury, merely at the recital of an old woman's taking out a tooth from a young girl. We believe this sentiment of pity very probable and possible even in a being however ferocious and wicked. "And she drew out a tooth! this miserable old wretch," said Rodolphe. "I guess so, and not at the first trial either—mon Dieu! how she laboured, holding my head between her knees, as in a vice. At length, half with her pincers, and half with her fingers, she succeeded in drawing one of my teeth, which she held up before me, saying, no doubt to frighten me, 'Now take care, Pegriotte, or I'll pull one out every day, and when you have none left, I'll throw you into the river, where the fishes shall eat you, out of revenge for the worms you have furnished to take them.' I remember that, because I thought it unjust—just as if I went to get the worms for my amusement!" "Ah! the hussey! to take out a tooth from a poor child," said the Chourineur, with renewed rage. "Well, it has come again," said Fleur de Marie, opening her beautiful rosy lips, and showing two rows of small teeth, as white as pearls. Was this indifference, forgetfulness, or instinctive generosity on the part of this young creature? Rodolphe had remarked that during the whole recital of her wrongs, she had never expressed any feeling of hatred against the atrocious woman who had so cruelly treated her. "Well, what did you do after this?" asked the Chourineur. "Ma foi! I had quite enough; the next day, instead of going after worms, I was away in the direction of the Pan-

theon. I walked during the whole day—would have gone to the end of the world rather than fall into the clutches of La Chouette. A I found myself in an unknown quarter, I had met no one from whom I could ask charity and, besides, I should not have dared to do so. During the night I slept in a wood-yard, under a pile of boards. I was small as a mouse, slipping under an old door, I made my nest in a heap of bark. I was almost starved; tried to chew some shavings, to cheat my hunger, but I could not. I could only bite little birch bark; it was more tender; thereupon I fell asleep; at daylight, hearing a noise, I drew closer under the pile of boards; it was really quite warm, like a cave; if I had had only something to eat, I should not have been as comfortable all winter." "Just so with me when in a lime-kiln."

"I did not dare to go out of the board yard for I imagined that La Chouette was looking for me to pull out my teeth and throw me to the fishes, and that she would be sure to catch me if I stirred from there."

"Stop; don't speak any more of that old self—it makes my blood rush to my eyes!"

"To proceed: on the second day, I had fallen again of the birch, and had fallen almost asleep, when I heard the hoarse barking of a dog. I started up and listened; the dog kept barking, and evidently approaching my retreat. Fortunately—why, I know not, he dared not come nearer—but you laugh! Chourineur."

"With you, there is always something to laugh about; but never mind, you are a good girl and, hold! *for d'honnme!* I am sorry I struck you."

"Because, if you beat me, I have no one to defend me." "And I," said Rodolphe.

"You are very kind, Mr. Rodolphe; but the Chourineur did not know that you were the next I either."

"Never mind, I hold to what I said. I am sorry I struck you," continued the Chourineur.

"Go on with your story, my child," said Rodolphe.

"I was under the pile of boards when I heard the dog bark; and while he continued to bark I heard a voice say, 'My dog barks; there some one concealed in the yard—*kes!* *kes!* shake him, catch him.' The dog sprang upon me, and I, fearing he would bite me, commenced screaming with all my strength. 'Ho! said the voice; 'that is the cry of a child. They called off the dog, and brought a lantern. I came out of my hole, and found myself face to face with a great fat man and a boy in a blue coat. 'What are you doing in my yard, you little thief?' said the fat man to me, in a savagely manner. My good sir, I have not eaten for ten days; I have run away from La Chouette, and have pulled out one of my teeth, and want to throw me to the fishes; not knowing where to sleep, I crept under your gateway; I have spent all night on the shavings under the boards; meant no harm. Then the wood-merchant spoke to his boy, 'Oh! I am not to be duped; is a little thief; she came to steal my logs.'"

"Ah! the old hog! the old beast!" cried the Chourineur. "Steal his logs! and you are years old!"

"It was foolish; for his boy answered

aid, 'Steal your logs, master! how could she o it! Why, she isn't as big as the smallest of our logs.' 'You are right,' said the fat man; but if she doesn't come on her own account, he has been sent as a spy, to open the door for others—we must take her to the police."

"Ah! the pitiful beast of a merchant!"

"I am brought before a magistrate; I am accused of being a vagabond; I am sent to prison; condemned always as a vagabond, to remain, until sixteen years old, in the house of correction. I thank the judges for their kindness. Marry! only think, that in prison I had something to eat; I was never beaten—mon Dieu! it was a paradise in comparison with the garany of La Chouette. Besides, in prison I was taught to sew; but here was the misfortune, I was idle and lazy; I preferred to sing rather than work, especially when I saw the sun. Oh! when it was fair and bright in the court of the jail, I could not keep from singing; and then—oh! it is so droll!—as I sung I forgot I was a prisoner."

"That is to say, my girl, you are a real nightingale, by birth," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"You are very kind, Mr. Rodolphe; it is since hat time that they have called me La Goualeuse, instead of La Pegriotte. At length I reached my sixteenth year—I came out of prison. Just at the door, I found the Ogresse, and two or three old women, who had sometimes come to see some of the prisoners, and who had always said she would have some work for me, when I should be discharged. 'Ah—good! good! I understand,'" said the Chourineur. "My dolphin, my angel, little darling," said the Ogresse, and the old woman, will you come and lodge with us? we will give you fine dresses, and you shall have nothing to do but to amuse yourself. You know well, Chourineur, one could hardly live eight ears in prison, without understanding these features." "I sent them off—I said to myself, 'I know how to sew.' I have three hundred francs—I have youth."

"And very pretty youth, too," my dear, said he Chourineur.

"I said to myself, I have passed eight years in prison, now I mean to enjoy life a little; for that will hurt no one, and I can work when my money is gone; so I danced as long as my money lasted. That was my great fault," added Jeur de Marie, with a sigh; "I ought, first of all, to have procured work, but I had no one to counsel me; 'enfin'—what is done, is done."

"I spent my money; in the first place, I bought flowers, which I placed all around my chamber; 'I love flowers so dearly;' then I bought a dress, a fine shawl, and then I went to take a ride on a donkey, in the Bois de Boulogne, and at St. Germain's also."

"With a sweetheart, my dear?" asked the Chourineur.

"Ma foi, no! I wanted to be my own master. I made these excursions with one of my companions, who came from the founding hospital; a good little girl; she was called Rigolette, because she was always laughing."

"Rigolette? Rigolette? I don't know her," said the Chourineur, meditating.

"Oh, I believe you don't; she is a fine girl, is Rigolette, a very good workwoman, and gains

at least twenty-five sous a day; she has a nice little room of her own, but I can never visit her more. At length, I had but forty-three francs left."

"You ought to have bought some trinkets with that," said the Chourineur. "Ma foi! I did better than that. I had for washerwoman a woman called 'La Lorraine,' a good creature; she was 'enceinte'; not being able to work longer, she had applied for admission into 'La Bourbe'; there was no more room, she was refused, she earned nothing; there she was without a sous to pay for a lodging. Fortunately, she met by chance, one evening, at the corner of the Pont-Neuf, the wife of Goubin, who had concealed herself for four days in the cellar of a house they were pulling down, back of the Hôtel Dieu." "And why did Goubin's wife hide in this cellar?" "To escape from her husband, who wished to kill her! She only came out at night, to buy some bread; in that manner she met with poor Lorraine, who did not know where to lay her head, expecting every moment her 'accouchement,' seeing this, she took her to the cellar, where she concealed herself. It was, at least, a place of shelter." "Stop! stop!" said the Chourineur: the wife of Goubin is Helmina, is it not?" "Yes! a good soul," answered the Goualeuse. "A seamstress who had worked for me and Rigolette. Marry: she did all she could in giving half of her cellar, her straw, and her bread, to poor Lorraine—in this place the poor little stranger came into the world! ah me! no covering, nothing but straw! Helmina, pitying her destitute condition, came to seek me, in broad day, even at the risk of being murdered, for her husband was seeking her everywhere. She knew I yet had a little money, and that I was not hard-hearted; just at that moment I was stepping in a cabriolet with Rigolette; we were going to the country to finish my forty-three francs. Oh! I do so love the country—the fields, and meadows, and trees. But, ah! when Helmina told me the situation of Lorraine, I sent away the carriage, I ran to my chamber, took what linen I had, my blanket, my mattress, put them on the shoulders of a porter, and sent them to the cellar. I followed with Helmina—ah! you should have seen how happy she was! poor Lorraine, we nursed her, Helmina and myself; and, with the aid of my money, we got her along, until she was able to go to her washing again. Now she is able to gain her living—but I never can get her to give an account of how much I owe her for washing! I see plain enough, she wants to pay me in washing; however, if she don't give me her bill, I'll change my washerwoman," said La Goualeuse, with an important air.

"And Goubin's wife?" said the Chourineur.

"How! Don't you know?"

"No: what is it?" "Ah! the unfortunate Goubin found her out; some one told him that she was somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Hôtel Dieu; and one night, as she came out of the cellar to get some milk for Lorraine, he killed her—three blows of the knife between the shoulders!"

"It is for that, then, that he has been condemned to death, and will be executed in three days?" said the Chourineur. "Exactly," said

La Goualeuse. "When you gave all your money to Lorraine, what did you do then, my girl?" said Rodolphe.

"Marry! then I sought for work. I knew how to sew very well, I was of good courage, was not embarrassed, so I went into a linen store of the Rue St. Martin. Not to deceive any one, I said I was but two months out of prison, and that I was desirous of getting work; they showed me the door. I asked for work to take home, if it was only a shirt. They laughed at me; so I returned very sad. I met the Ogresse and one of the old women, who were always after me. They took me home, they made me drink brandy, and that's all."

"I understand," said the Chourineur. "I know you just as well now as if I was your father and mother, and you had never left my lap. Well! that's what I call a confession."

"You look sad, my girl," said Rodolphe, "after your story." "The truth is, it makes me feel sad to look back; since my infancy it is the first time that it has ever happened that I have recalled to my memory all these things at the same time; it is not pleasant, is it, Chourineur?"

"Just so," said he, in an ironical manner; "you regret that you were not a scullion in an eating-house, or servant-maid to some old devils and their imps?" "Never mind; it must be pleasant to be good," said Fleur de Marie, with a sigh.

"Good! oh, the devil!" cried the bandit, with a burst of laughter. "Good! and why not a nun at once, for the honour of your father and mother, whom you never knew?" The face of the young girl lost for a moment its usual expression of indifference. "Stop," said the Chourineur; "I am not a Pleurnichouse.* My parents threw me into the street, like a little dog that one has 'de trop.' I don't blame them for it, for perhaps they had not enough to eat themselves! But that is no reason for saying, Chourineur, that there are no situations better than mine."

"You! but what do you want! you are as flambanté as a Venus; you are not yet seventeen; you sing like a nightingale; you are called Fleur de Maria (virgin), yet you complain! What will you say when you have a stone under your feet, and a chinchilla wig, like the Ogresse?" "I shall never live to that age." "Perhaps you have a patent to prevent your growing old." "No; but I am not strong, and already I have a bad cough!" "Ha! ha! good; I already think I see you in a hearse. Go along! you are foolish!"

"Have you these gloomy thoughts often, La Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe. "Sometimes. Listen, Mr. Rodolphe; perhaps you can comprehend me; in the morning, when I go to buy my pennysworth of milk from the milkwoman at the corner of the Rue de la Vielle-Draperie, and I see her about returning home, with her little horse and wagon, I feel very envious; I say to myself, 'There she goes to the country fine air, to her own house, her own family, while I return to the den of the Ogresse, dark and gloomy, even at mid-day.' "Well! well! be 'honnête,' my dear; play a farce—be 'honnête!'" said the Chourineur.

* *Pleurnichouse*, one who cries.

"Honnête! mon Dieu! and how would you have me be honnête! The clothes I wear belong to the Ogresse; I owe her for my board and lodging. I dare not stir from here. She would have me arrested. I belong to her. *I must pay my debt.*" As she pronounced these horrible words, the unfortunate creature shuddered.

"Then remain as you are, and think no more of a country life," said the Chourineur. "Are you a fool! Only think how you will shine in the city, while the milkwoman makes a pottage for her children, milks her cows, collects herbs for her rabbits, and gets a blow from her husband when he comes from the tavern."

"Some drink, Chourineur," said Fleur de Marie, hastily, after a short silence, as she held out her glass. "No, no! not wine—brandy: it is stronger," said she, in her sweet voice, as she put back the jug of wine the Chourineur held to her glass.

"Brandy! good; ah! now I love you, my dear; you are a madcap!" said this man, not understanding the movement of the young girl, and without remarking a tear which stood trembling in the soft eyes of La Goualeuse.

"It is a pity that brandy is so disagreeable to drink, for it hardens one so," said Fleur de Marie, placing her glass on the table, after having drank with as much repugnance as disgust.

Rodolphe had listened to this artless narrative with a growing interest. Misery and poverty, but not crime, had been the ruin of this poor young girl.

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORY OF THE CHOURINEUR.

THE reader has not forgotten that two of the guests of the tapis-franc were attentively watched by a third person, whose arrival we have recorded. One of these two men, we have remarked, wore a Greek cap, and kept his hand concealed, and had asked the Ogresse if the Maître d'Ecole had not yet come.

During the story of the Goualeuse, which they could not hear, these two men had conversed in a low tone, regarding the door from time to time with great anxiety. He who wore the Greek cap said to his companion, "The Maître d'Ecole does not come; I hope that the zig (comrade) may not have been *escarpé à la capahut* (assassinated, to steal his part of the booty)." "That would be flaming for us who arranged the burglary," answered the other.

The new-comer, who was seated at too great a distance to hear what these men said, after having consulted a paper which he held concealed in his cap, appeared to be satisfied with the result, for he came from the table, and said to the Ogresse, who was nodding at her counter, with her feet on the stove, and the black cat on her knees, "I say, Mother Pomisse, just keep an eye on my glass and plate. I'll be back in a moment; and one must look out for freebooters." "Be easy, my good man," said Mother Pomisse; "if your plate and glass are empty, no one will touch them." The man laughed at the pleasantry of the Ogresse, and disappeared without any one noticing his departure.

As the door opened when the man went out, Rodolphe perceived in the street the coachman of whom we have spoken; and before the door was closed, he had time to make an impatient gesture, to show how much he was annoyed at being thus watched; but this latter paid no attention to the contrariety of Rodolphe, and did not quit the precincts of the tapis-franc.

Notwithstanding the glass of brandy she had taken, La Goualeuse did not recover her gaiety: under its influence, her expression, on the contrary, became more sad: her back against the wall, her head hanging on her breast, her large blue eyes gazing vacantly around, the unfortunate creature seemed overwhelmed with the most gloomy thoughts. Two or three times, seeing the fixed regards of Rodolphe, she had turned away in confusion, and could not account for the impression caused by this unknown. Restrained, oppressed by his presence, she reproached herself for not showing more gratitude to one who had saved her from the Chourineur; she almost regretted having so plainly related her life. The Chourineur, on the contrary, was very gay; he alone devoured the "*harlequin*." The wine and brandy had made him very talkative; the shame of having found his master, as he said, was effaced by the generous treatment of Rodolphe; and, besides, he acknowledged such a vast physical superiority, that his humiliation gave way to a mixed sentiment of admiration, fear, and respect.

This entire absence of revenge, the savage rankness with which he had acknowledged that he killed, and had been justly punished, the atrocious pride with which he had denied that he had ever stolen, proved at least that, notwithstanding his crimes, the Chourineur was not completely callous: this had not escaped the observation of Rodolphe, and he waited, somewhat curious to hear his story. The ambition of man is so insatiable, so bizarre in its pretensions, that Rodolphe actually wished for the arrival of the Maître d'Ecole, that terrible brigand, whose throne he had almost overturned. To allay his impatience, he requested the Chourineur to go on with his story. "Come, mon gargon," said he to him, "we listen." The Chourineur emptied his glass, and thus began: "You, my poor Goualeuse, you have at least been taken care of by 'La Chonette,' whom the devil confound. You have had at least a shelter until you were sent to prison as a vagabond. I cannot remember ever to have slept in what you call a bed, before I was nineteen, 'bel âge,' when I became a trooper." "You have been in the service, Chourineur?" said Rodolphe. "Three years; but we will come to that presently. The pavement of the Louvre, the plaster-tins of Clichy, and the quarries of Montrouge, these were the hotels of my youth—you see I had town house and country house." "Ha! ha! what trade did you follow?" "Ma foi! my master! I have an indistinct recollection of having lived in my childhood with an old 'Chiffonnier,' who knocked me down with his iron hook: this must be so, for I never meet one of these cupids, with their rag baskets, that I do not feel the greatest desire to pounce on them; proof enough that they beat me when I was a child. My first occupation was to help the *quarisseurs* (horse killers) cut the throats of

horses at Montfaucon. I was about ten or twelve years old when I first began to 'chouriner' the poor beasts. At first I felt badly, but at the end of a month that was all gone; and then, on the contrary, I liked the business. There was no one who had such sharp knives as I had, so I was always in demand. After I had 'égorgé' the beasts, they threw me a piece of the rump of a horse, which had died from some complaint, for my pay; for those which we killed were sold to the 'fritoteurs' of the quarter of the 'Ecole de Médecine,' who made beef, lamb, veal, or game of it, just to suit any one's taste. Ah! when I got my piece of horse-flesh, the king was not my master; I flew to my kiln, like a wolf to his den, and there, with the permission of the lime burners, I roasted my meat on the coals. When the workmen were not there, I went and gathered some sticks at Romainville, struck fire, and made my roast by the walls of the slaughter-house. '*Dame*!' it was raw and bloody: but for all that, I did not eat the less." "And your name! what did they call you?" said Rodolphe.

"My hair was still more the colour of flax then than it is now, and the blood was always rushing to my eyes; on that account they called me Albino—(the albinoes are the white rabbits—*lupin-blanc*—among men, and they have red eyes)," added the Chourineur gravely, speaking by way of physiological parenthesis. "And your parents? your family?" "My family? Oh! they lodged at the same number as those of La Goualeuse. The place of my birth! The first corner of no matter what street, the curbstone at the right or left as you go down to the gutter." "You cursed your father and mother, then, for having abandoned you?" "Oh! that would have done me a great deal of good. However, they did play a poor farce in bringing me into the world. I would not complain, if I had been made as '*le bon Dieu*' ought to make poor folks; that is to say, without feeling hunger and thirst; then it would not cost them so much to be honest." "You have been hungry and cold, and yet you have not stolen, Chourineur?" "No, no; yet I have seen much misery—much misery. I have fasted sometimes more than two days, more than my turn; but I have never stolen." "For fear of the prison?" "Oh! what a farce!" said the Chourineur. "I would not then have stolen bread, for fear of getting bread! Honest, I was starving. Thief, they would have fed me in prison. No! no! I did not steal because—because—because it is not in my nature to steal." This truly great answer, of which the Chourineur himself did not comprehend the bearing, profoundly astonished Rodolphe. He felt that a poor wretch who could thus remain honest amid the most cruel privations, was doubly to be respected, since the punishment of the crime would have offered him a certain refuge; and he extended his hand to this unfortunate, whom misery had not completely lost. The Chourineur regarded him with astonishment and respect; hardly dared he to touch the hand offered to him; he felt that between the two there was an impenetrable abyss.

"Well, well," said Rodolphe, "you have yet a heart and honour."

"Ma foi! I know nothing about it," said the

Chourineur, much affected; "what do you say—now see—I never felt so before; what is sure is this: no matter for the blows of the fist, which you might have repeated until to-morrow; instead of which you give me to eat and drink, and say such things to me—no matter, in life or death I am yours; you can always count on the Chourineur."

Rodolphe answered coldly, not wishing him to see his emotion: "And did you a long time remain an *équarisseur*?" "I guess so. At first it made me sick to kill these poor old creatures; afterward it amused me; but when I became sixteen it became a rage, a perfect passion to *chouriner*. I forgot to eat and drink—I only thought of that. You ought to have seen me in the midst of my work—except an old cotton pantaloon, I was entirely naked—when, with my knife, well-sharpened, in my hand, I had around me (I don't magnify) from fifteen to twenty horses all waiting their turn. Thunder!! when I began to cut their throats, I don't know what got into me; it was like madness: I had a buzzing in my ears—my head went round—the blood was in my eyes, and I saw all red—red; and I stabbed, and I stabbed, and I stabbed until the knife would fall from my hands. Thunder! it was an enjoyment! If I had been a millionaire I would have paid to work at that trade."

"It was this, then, that gave you the habit to *chouriner*?" said Rodolphe. "Yes, that may be; but when I was sixteen this madness became so strong, that one day, while I was at work, I became crazy, and I spoiled my work. Yes! I injured the skins, by sticking in the knife to the right and left; so they put me out of doors. Then I wished to get employment among the butchers; they turned up their noses, as a bootmaker does at a cobbler. Seeing this, and my rage to 'chouriner' passing away with my sixteenth year, I began to look for my bread in another manner. I did not find it very soon, and then I fasted. Finally, I got employment in the quarries of Mont Rouge; but at the end of two years, I was almost used up in playing the squirrel in the large wheel by which we drew up the stones, at twenty sous a day. I was tall and strong, and I enlisted in a regiment: they asked me my name, my age, and for my papers. My name? Albino; my age? see my beard; my papers? here is the certificate of my master quarry-man. As I made a first-rate grenadier, I was enrolled." "With your strength, your courage, and your mania 'to chouriner,' if there had been a war in those times, you might have become an officer," said Rodolphe. "Thunder! to whom do you say it? To 'chouriner' an Englishman or a Prussian would have given a different kind of pleasure than to 'chouriner' an old horse. But there was the difficulty; there was no war, and there was no discipline. An apprentice may fetch a blow to his master very well: if he is the weakest, he takes it; if he is the strongest, he gives it; they turn him out of doors, or send him to jail—nothing more. But in the service it is quite another thing. One day, my sergeant gave me a 'bouscule' to make me obey more quickly; he was right, for I was playing the 'clampire': that made me mad, and I kicked him; he pushed and I pushed; he took me by

the throat, and I gave him a blow with my fist. They fell upon me: then my madness took possession of me, my blood flew to my eyes, and I saw red. I had my knife in my hand, for I was in the kitchen, and—and—I began to 'chouriner' as at the slaughter-house. I killed the sergeant, I wounded two soldiers; real butchery! eleven blows of the knife to the three—yes, eleven—blood—blood as in the slaughter-house!!!"

The brigand let his head fall on his breast, and remained for some time with a fixed and haggard look. "What are you thinking about, Chourineur?" asked Rodolphe, with an air of interest.

"Nothing, nothing," he answered, roughly, and then went on with his usual indifference. "I was seized, judged, and condemned to death." "You escaped?" "No; but I was sent for fifteen years to the galleys instead of being executed." I had forgotten to tell you, that while I belonged to the regiment we were in garrison at Melun, where I saved two comrades from drowning in the Marne. Another time—you will laugh, and say I am amphibious both for fire and water; a preserver of men and women—another time, being in garrison at Rouen, a fire broke out among houses, all of wood; it burned like a box of matches. I belonged to the fire service; we arrived at the fire; they told me that there was an old woman who could not get out, and would be burned. I ran thither. Thunder! how hot it was! It made me remember the lime-kiln of my early days; finally, I saved the old creatures. My lawyer twisted his tongue so much, and made such a talk, that my punishment was changed, so that, instead of going to the scaffold, I had fifteen years at the galleys. When I found that I should not be killed, my first idea was to jump at the throat of my 'avocat' and choke him! Can you understand that, my master?"

"Did you regret that your sentence was commuted?" "Yes! to those who play with a knife, let the knife be given; it is just. To those who steal, irons on their legs. Each one his lot: but to make you live after you have assassinated! hold! The judges don't know what an effect that has at first."

"You have felt remorse; then, Chourineur?"

"Remorse? no; for I served my time," said the savage. "But formerly there was hardly a night that I did not see the sergeant and soldier whom I 'chouriné' pass before me in a kind of night-mare: that is to say, not alone, not one, two, or three, but by tens, hundreds, thousands, waiting their turn in a kind of slaughter-house, like the horses that I had 'égorgé' at Montfaucon. Then I would see red, and begin 'to chouriner,' to 'chouriner' these men, like the horses formerly; but the more I stabbed the soldiers, the more they came back, and in dying they looked at me with eyes so soft—so soft, that I cursed myself for killing them: but I could not stop myself. And this was not all. I never had a brother, yet it seemed that all these people that I assassinated were my brothers; brothers whom I could have gone through fire to save. At length, when I could stand it no longer, I awoke, drenched with a cold sweat—a sweat as cold as frozen snow."

"That was an ugly dream, Chourineur?"

"Oh! yes. Well, when I first went to the galleys, every night I had it—that dream! It was enough to make one mad, so I tried to kill myself; once by swallowing verdgris, and another time I endeavoured to hang myself in my chains. But I am as strong as a bull: the verdgris made me thirsty, that's all; and as for the chain which I passed round my neck, that only made a mark, a sort of natural blue eravat. After that, the habit of living conquered; my nightmare became more rare, and I did just as every one else did."

"You were in a good school to learn to steal."

"Yes; but it wasn't to my taste. The other criminals laughed at me, but I beat them with my chain. That is the way I became acquainted with the *Maitre d'Ecole*. As for him, look out for fists! He gave me my pay just like you gave me yours, a short time since."

"He is, then, a liberated criminal?" "No; he was condemned for life, but he made his escape." "He escaped? and yet he is not denounced?" "It is not I who will denounce him; besides, that would look as if I was afraid of him." "But how comes it that the police can't find him? Haven't they a description of his person?" "Oh yes! but it is a long time since; he has so altered his appearance that hardly the devil himself would know him." "In what manner has he done it?" "He began by cutting off a piece of his nose, which was half a yard long; and then he washed his face in vitriol." "You are joking?" "If he comes to-night you will see; he had a large nose like a parrot; now it is as flat as your hand: his lips are as large as your fist, and his olive face as much seamed as the coat of a *chiffonnier*." "And now he is so altered that he cannot be recognised?" "It is six months since he escaped from Rochefort, and the officers have met him a hundred times without knowing him." "Why was he sent to the galleys?" "For counterfeiting, robbery, and assassination. They call him *Maitre d'Ecole*, because he writes a superb hand, and is quite learned." "Is he very much feared?" "He will be no longer, when you have rinsed him as you have rinsed me. Thunder! I am very curious to see that." "What does he for a living?" "They say that he boasts of having killed and rifled a cattle merchant, about three weeks since, on the Poissy road." "He will, sooner or later, be arrested." "It will take more than two to do that, for he always carries, concealed under his blouse, two loaded pistols and a poniard; he will never be cut down but once; *allez*. He will kill any one and every one to escape; he does not conceal it; and as he is twice as strong as you and me, they had better let him alone." "When you left the galleys what did you then, *Chourineur*?" "I went and offered my services to the master workman at the Quai St. Paul, where I earn my living." "But, since you are not a robber, why do you live in the *cité*?" "Where would you have me live? Who wants to associate with a criminal? And since it is very *'ennuyant'* to be alone, and I like company, I come here to associate with my fellows. They fear me like the devil in the *cité*, and the officers have nothing to say to me, except sometimes I am sent to the jug for twenty-four hours, for assault and

battery." "How much do you earn each day?" "Thirty-five sous; that I'll do as long as I have arms. When my strength is gone I'll take a hook and a basket, like the old *chiffonnier*, that I recollect in my childhood." "So, with all this you are not unhappy?" "There are many worse off than I am certainly, and if it was not for my dreams of the sergeant and the soldiers, dreams which I yet have, I could die tranquilly at the corner of the street or in the hospital; but this dream—hold—*mon de nom*! I don't like to think about it," said the *Chourineur*, and he struck the ashes from his pipe on the corner of the table. The *Goualeuse* had listened to the story with an absent air; she seemed plunged in a painful reverie. *Rodolphe* himself remained thoughtful; the two stories he had just heard had awakened new ideas; but a tragical incident recalled to his mind in what place he was.

CHAPTER V.

AN ARREST.

THE man who went out for a moment, after having requested the *Ogresse* to look after his plate and cup, now returned, accompanied by another person, with broad shoulders and powerful frame. He said to him, "A lucky chance to meet you in this way, *Borel*. Come in, and take a drink."

The *Chourineur* whispered to *Rodolphe*, pointing to the new-comer, "There is going to be a storm: he is a constable: look out!" The two bandits of whom we have spoken exchanged a rapid glance, raised themselves simultaneously from the table, and made a rush for the door; the two agents sprang on them, making a peculiar cry. A terrible conflict ensued; but the door of the tavern opened, and other officers entered, and outside could be seen a troop of *gendarmes*. Profiting by the tumult, the coalman heretofore mentioned advanced in the doorway, and, catching a look from *Rodolphe*, he placed on his lips the fore-finger of his right hand. *Rodolphe*, with a rapid and imperious gesture, commanded him to retire, and then turned to observe what was passing before him. The man with the Greek cap uttered cries of rage; half extended on the table, three men could hardly restrain him. Annihilated, melancholy, with livid face, blanched lips, the lower jaw fallen, and convulsively agitated, his companion made no resistance, but held out his hands to be manacled.

The *Ogresse*, accustomed to such scenes, remained seated in her bar, with her hands in the pockets of her apron. "What have these men been doing, my good Mr. *Borel*?" she asked of one of the officers, whom she knew. "They have murdered an old woman who lived in the Rue St. Christophe, that they might rob her house. Before she died, the poor creature said she had bitten one of them in the hand. We have had our eye upon these scoundrels, and my comrade was here a little while since to be assured of their identity: now we've nabbed them." "Fortunately, they paid me for their liquor in advance," said the *Ogresse*. "Won't you take something, Mr. *Borel*? a glass of perfect love? or some consolation?"

"Thank you, Mother *Ponisse*; I must take care of these brigands; there's one of them kick-

ing yet." In effect, one of them began to struggle again; and when they were about to lead him to the truck which stood at the door, he resisted so violently that they were obliged to carry him. His accomplice, seized with a nervous shuddering, could hardly support himself; his violet lips shook as if he were speaking, and they were obliged to cast him into the vehicle more dead than alive."

"Ah! look here, Mother Ponisse!" said one of the officers; "you had better look out for Bras-Rouge; he is mischievous, and may compromise you." "Bras-Rouge! oh, he hasn't been in this quarter for weeks, Mr. Borel." "Oh! he is always after something when he is not seen; you know that well enough; but don't you receive any package from him on deposit, or in any other manner, that would be—" "Oh, be quite easy, Mr. Borel; I am as afraid of Bras-Rouge as I am of the devil. No one knows where he comes from, or whither he goes. The last time I saw him, he told me he had just come from Germany." "Very well; I warn you; pay attention."

Before quitting the "tapis-franc," the agent cast a scrutinizing glance on the other drinkers, and then said to the Chourineur, in a tone almost affectionate, "Ah, here you are, 'mav'nais sujet'! It is a long time since I have heard of you; have you no more fights? have you become a good boy?" "Good as an image, Mr. Borel; you know I only break the heads of those who request it; but, nevertheless, here is my master," said the Chourineur, placing his hand on the shoulder of Rodolphe. "Hold! I don't know him," said the agent, looking at Rodolphe. "And we will not make acquaintance, my comrade," said the latter.

"I hope not, on your account, 'mon garçon,'" said the agent; and then addressing himself to the Ogresse, "Bon soir, Mother Ponisse; your tapis-franc is like a real mousetrap; this is the third assassin I have caught in it." "I really hope it will not be the last, Monsieur Borel; it is very much at your service," said the Ogresse, graciously, making a profound reverence.

After the departure of the police agent, the young man who was smoking and drinking brandy, as we have before mentioned, refilled his pipe, and said to the Chourineur, in a hoarse voice, "Don't you recognise the Greek cap? Why, it is the man 'à la boulotte'; it is Velu. When I saw the agent come in, I thought something was the matter, as he kept his hand always concealed under the table." "It is quite lucky for the Maître d'Ecole that he wasn't here," said the Ogresse. "The Greek cap asked for him several times; he said they had business together. But I don't eat my customers; don't bite off my own head. When they are arrested, good—every one to his trade—but I don't sell them. Hold! when one speaks of the wolf, you see his tail," added the Ogresse, at the moment that a man and woman entered the tavern: "here are the Maître d'Ecole and his wife." A sort of shuddering appeared to spread among the guests of the tapis-franc; and Rodolphe himself, notwithstanding his natural intrepidity, could not repress a slight emotion at the sight of this redoubtable brigand, whom he regarded, for some moments, with a curiosity mixed with horror.

The Chourineur had told the truth, for he had horribly mutilated himself. It is impossible to imagine anything more frightful than the visage of this brigand. His face was furrowed in every

direction with deep livid scars; the corrosive action of the virus had swollen his lips; the cartilage of the nose having been cut, two immense holes replaced the nostrils; his clear gray eyes, very small and very round, sparkled with ferocity; his forehead, flat, like that of a tiger, was half covered by a cap of long, red fur; it might have been called the monster's mane. The Maître d'Ecole was not less than six feet two or three inches in height; his head, too large for his body, was sunk down between his immense shoulders; he had long, muscular arms, with short, fat hands, hairy, even to the ends of his fingers; his legs were short and slightly bent, but the enormous calves announced a force "athlétique." As for the expression of ferocity which shone out of this hideous mask—as for the restless, suspicious, burning looks, like those of a savage beast, we cannot describe them. The woman who accompanied him was old; she was decently clad in a red and black tartan plaid, and wore a white hat. Rodolphe, seeing her profile, her green and round eye, her crooked nose, her thin lips, her extending chin, her wicked and cunning physiognomy, thought of the description of La Chouette. He was about to mention this to La Goualeuse, when he saw her suddenly turn pale; she seemed to look with intense interest at the companion of the Maître d'Ecole. At length, seizing the arm of Rodolphe with a trembling hand, she said to him, in a low voice, "'La Chouette'—'mon Dieu'—'La Chouette'—'La Borgnesse'!" At this moment the Maître d'Ecole, exchanging some words in a low tone with one of the habitués of the tapis-franc, advanced slowly to the table where Rodolphe was seated with La Goualeuse and the Chourineur, and, addressing Fleur de Marie in a deep and hoarse voice, like the growlings of a tiger, said, "Ah, say, now, my 'belle blonde,' you must leave these two jockeys and come with me." The Goualeuse made no answer, but moved closer to Rodolphe; her teeth were chattering with fear. "As for me, I shall not be jealous," said the horrible Chouette, laughing. She had not yet recognised in La Goualeuse the poor little "Pegriotte," her victim.

"Ah! ah! now, petite, don't you understand me?" said the monster, advancing. "If you don't come, I'll put out one of your eyes, and make you look like La Chouette; as for you, man with mustaches," addressing Rodolphe, "if you don't throw me that little blonde over the table, I'll tear—" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! defend me!" cried La Goualeuse to Rodolphe, joining her hands; then, reflecting that perhaps she was going to expose him to great danger, she said to him in a low voice, "No, no, don't stir, Monsieur Rodolphe; if he approaches, I'll cry for help; and, for fear of a noise that will attract the police, the Ogresse will take my part." "Be tranquil, my girl," said Rodolphe, looking boldly at the Maître d'Ecole: "you are at my side; you shall not stir; and, as that hideous animal there makes you sick as well as myself, I am going to throw him into the street—" "You!" said the Maître d'Ecole. "I!" answered Rodolphe; and, notwithstanding the efforts of La Goualeuse, he rose from the table. The Maître d'Ecole retreated one step at the terrible aspect of the physiognomy of Rodolphe. Fleur de Marie and the Chourineur were also struck by the wicked and hardened expression of diabolical rage which at this moment contracted the noble traits of their companion; yet

became unrecognizable. In his contest with the Chourineur, he had shown his contempt and scorn; but, face to face with the Maître d'Ecole, he seemed possessed with a hatred the most ferocious; the pupils of his eyes, strongly dilated, sparkled with a vivacity most savage. Certain expressions have an irresistible magnetic power, which terrifies those under their influence, and which they cannot avoid. Rodolphe was endowed with this faculty, and the Maître d'Ecole, trembling, made another retreating step; he no longer seemed to rely upon his vaunted strength, but sought, under his blouse, for the handle of his poniard. A bloody murder might thus have stained the floor of the tapis-franc, if La Chouette had not seized him by the arm, crying, "Stop! stop! 'fourline' (assassin), let me say a word. You shall eat those two cocks by-and-by—they shan't escape." For some time La Chouette had been regarding Fleur de Marie with attention; she appeared as if endeavouring to recall something to her recollection. At length she no longer had any doubt; she had recognised La Goualeuse. "Is it possible?" said La Borgnesse, clasping her hands with astonishment; "this is La Pegriotte, the thief of my barley-sugar; where in the world do you come from? does the devil send you here?" added she, shaking her fist at the young girl. "Ah! you shall come again under my clutches; don't be afraid, I shan't pull any more teeth, but I'll draw every tear out of you. 'Ah! vas-tu rager!' You don't know, then, that I have found out your parents? The Maître d'Ecole saw, at the galleries, the man who gave you to me when you were a child. He told him the name of your mother. Oh! they are rich people—your parents."

"My parents! You know them?" cried Fleur de Marie. "Yes! my man knows the name of your mother, but I'll tear out his tongue before he shall tell you! Why, it was only yesterday that he saw the man who brought you to me, because they would not pay his wife any more, who had nursed you. Your mother cared no more about you—she would like to have heard that you were dead, be assured. But, no matter, if you knew her name you could make her pay nicely, my little voleuse. The man I spoke of has papers—yes, Pegriotte, he has letters from your mother, of which he can make no use, because he has his own reasons. 'Heire!' you cry, Pegriotte. Well, no! you shall not know your mother; you shall not know her!" "I would rather she should think me dead," said Fleur de Marie, wiping her eyes.

Rodolphe, forgetting the Maître d'Ecole, had attentively listened to the recital of La Chouette, and appeared much interested. During this time, the brigand, being no longer under the influence of the eye of Rodolphe, had taken courage; he could not imagine that this young man of so slight a frame, could stand against him; sure of his own Herculean strength, he drew nearer to the defender of La Goualeuse, and said to la Chouette, in an authoritative manner, "Enough of this talk. I want to spoil the beauty of this jockey and pick out his feathers; so that 'la belle blonde' will find me more 'gentil' than he is." With one bound, Rodolphe jumped on the table. "Take care of my plates!" said the Ogresse: the Maître d'Ecole put himself in an attitude of defence, but at the moment that Rodolphe was about to jump at him, the door of the tapis-franc was opened violently; the coalman,

of whom we have spoken, and who was full six feet in height, rushed into the room, pushed the Maître d'Ecole rudely on one side, and approaching Rodolphe, whispered in English, "My lord, Tom and Sarah—they are at the end of the street." At these mysterious words, Rodolphe made an angry movement, cast a Louis on the counter of the Ogresse, and ran towards the door. The Maître d'Ecole endeavoured to obstruct the passage, but the latter turned for a moment, and gave him two such blows with his fist, that the bully staggered, and fell heavily across one of the tables. "Vive la Charte! there I recognise some of my blows at the end," cried the Chourineur. "One or two more lessons like that, and I will know how to give them." Coming to himself after a few seconds, the Maître d'Ecole started in pursuit of Rodolphe, who had disappeared with the coalman among the dark labyrinth of the cité; it was impossible to rejoin them. At the moment that the Maître d'Ecole re-entered, foaming with rage, two men, running from the side opposite to that by which Rodolphe had disappeared, rushed into the tapis-franc out of breath, as if they had been running a race. Their first movement was to look closely around the tavern. "How unfortunate!" said one: "he has escaped us again!" "Patience! the days have twenty-four hours, and life is long," answered the other. These new-comers spoke in English.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM AND SARAH.

THE two persons who just entered the tapis-franc evidently belonged to a class much more elevated than the usual "habitués" of this tavern. The one, tall and thin, had hair almost white, while his eyebrows and whiskers were quite black; a bony and dark face, and a severe and hardened aspect. His black hat was tied around with crape, his long black riding-coat was buttoned to his throat, and he wore over his pantaloons of gray cloth large military boots, formerly called "Suwarrows." His companion, of very small stature, was also dressed in mourning, and was pale and handsome. His long black hair and eyelashes, and his brilliant dark eyes, made a striking contrast to the whiteness of his complexion; by the carriage, size, and the delicacy of features, it was easy to be perceived that this was a woman disguised. "Tom, ask for something to drink, and question these people about him," said Sarah, always speaking in English. "Yes! Sarah," answered the man with white hair, seating himself at one of the tables, while Sarah wiped her forehead; and then speaking to the Ogresse, in good French, almost without accent, he said, "Madam, give us something to drink, if you please."

The entrance of these individuals had excited a lively attention; their dress, their manners, indicated they were no frequenters of such taverns, while their restless, busy movements, announced that no common business had brought them in that quarter. The Chourineur, the Maître d'Ecole, and La Chouette regarded them with great curiosity. The Goualeuse, alarmed at her "rencontre" with La Borgnesse, and fearing the threats of the Maître d'Ecole, had profited by the inattention of the two wretches, and slipped out by the half-open door, which led to the street.

The Chourineur and Maître d'Ecole, in their respective positions, had no interest in renewing the quarrel; surprised at the appearance of these people, the Ogresse partook of the general curiosity. Tom said to her a second time, rather impatiently, "Madame, we have asked for some drink; have the goodness to serve us." The Mother Ponisse, flattered by this courtesy, came and leaned graciously on the table, and said, "Will you have some wine on draught, or will you have a sealed bottle?" "Give us a bottle of wine, some glasses, and water." It was brought by the Ogresse. Tom threw her five francs, and refused the change. "Keep that, landlady, and take a glass of wine with us." "You are very polite, sir," said Mother Ponisse, looking at Tom with more astonishment than gratitude. "But tell me," continued he; "we have agreed to meet one of our comrades at a tavern in this street; perhaps we are mistaken in the place." "This is the 'Lapin-Blanc,' at your service, sir." "That's the name," said Tom, making a sign to Sarah. "Oh yes! it was at the 'Lapin-Blanc' we were to wait."

"I guess there are not two 'Lapins-Blancs' in this street," said the Ogresse, proudly; "but what kind of a man was your comrade?" "Tall and slender, hair and mustache, bright chestnut," said Tom. "Hold! hold! he was here just now—a coalman came to seek him, and they went away together." "It is they," said Tom. "And were they alone here?" asked Sarah. "That is to say, the coalman only came for a moment; your comrade supped here with La Goualeuse and the Chourineur," said the Ogresse, as she looked towards the Chourineur, the only remaining companion of Rodolphe. Tom and Sarah turned towards the Chourineur, and after a few moments' examination, Sarah said to Tom, in English, "Do you know this man?" "No; Karl lost sight of Rodolphe at the entrance of these alleys; seeing Murphy, disguised as a coalman, hovering around this tavern, and peeping through the windows, he suspected something, and came and advised me."

During this conversation, in a low tone of voice, and in a strange tongue, the Maître d'Ecole said to La Chouette, in a whisper, looking at Tom and Sarah, "The tall, thin fellow, gave five francs to the Ogresse: it is almost midnight; it blows and rains like the devil; when they go out I'll stun the big one, and take his money: he has a woman with him; he won't dare to make a noise. If the little dear cries, I have my vitriol in my pocket, and I'll break the bottle on her face," said the Borgnesse; "you must always give something to children when they cry." Then she added, "Say now, 'Fourline,' the first time we meet with Pegriotte, we must take her by authority: when I once have her, we'll wash her muzzle with my vitriol; that will prevent her from being so proud with her fine beau." "Stop! 'La Chouette,' it will end by my marrying you," said the Maître d'Ecole; "your match for address and courage is not to be found—that night with the beef-merchant—I watched you—I said to myself, there is my wife! she works better than a man." After having reflected for a moment, Sarah said to Tom, looking at the Chourineur, "If we interrogate this man about Rodolphe, we can perhaps find out what brought him here?" "We will try," said Tom; and, addressing the Chourineur, "Comrade," said he, "we expected to meet a friend here; he has supped with you: can you tell us where he has gone

to?" "I only know him, because he rinsed me two hours ago, in defending La Goualeuse."

"And you never saw him before?" "Never! we met in the alley of the house of Bras-Rouge."

"Landlady! another bottle, if you please; and of the best!" said Tom. Sarah and he had hardly wet their lips with glasses yet almost full; but the Mother Ponisse, to do honour, no doubt, to her own cellar, had several times emptied hers. "You will serve us, if you please, at the table of this gentleman, if he will permit it," added Tom, as he and Sarah took a seat alongside of the Chourineur, as much astonished as flattered at this politeness. The Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette still kept whispering about their sinister project. The fresh bottle served, and Tom and Sarah seated at the table with the Chourineur and the Ogresse, who seemed to regard a second invitation as superfluous, the conversation continued: "You said, then, 'mon brave,' that you met our comrade Rodolphe in the house of Bras-Rouge?" said Tom, touching glasses with the Chourineur. "Yes! mon brave," answered he, slowly emptying his glass. "Now that's a singular name—Bras-Rouge? who is Bras-Rouge?" "Il pastique la maltouze," said the Chourineur, negligently: "capital wine, Mother Ponisse!"

"On that account you shouldn't leave your tumbler empty, mon brave," said Tom, filling his glass. "To your good health," said he, "and to that of your little friend—who—enough—If my aunt was a man, she'd be my uncle, as the proverb says." "Go along, 'farceur'! I understand."

Sarah blushed imperceptibly. Tom continued: "I did not understand what you said about Bras-Rouge? Rodolphe came out of his house, doubtless? I told you that Bras-Rouge 'pastiquait la maltouze.'" Tom looked at the Chourineur with surprise. "What is that, which Bras-Rouge 'pastiquer la mal—' how do you call it?" "Pastiquer la maltouze! a smuggler. It appears that you do not 'devez pas le jers' (speak Argot). "My good fellow, I can't understand you." "Ah! then you don't speak 'Argot' like Mr. Rodolphe?" "Argot?" said Tom, regarding Sarah with surprise. "Come! come, you are but simple folks; but Rodolphe is a famous fellow, notwithstanding he is a painter of faïcs; why, he comes up to me in speaking 'Argot'; and since you can't speak this fine language, I'll tell you in good French that Bras-Rouge is a smuggler; and I say it without betraying him, for he does not conceal it, but boasts of it under the very noses of the officers. However, look for him, and catch him if you can." "Bras-Rouge is an evil spirit—take care!" "And what did Rodolphe want with this man?" asked Sarah. "Ma foi, monsieur or madame, at your choice, I know nothing about it, as true as I drink this wine. This evening, I wanted to beat La Goualeuse; I was wrong, for she is a good girl; she hid herself in the alley of Bras-Rouge's house. I pursued her; it was dark as the devil, and instead of falling upon La Goualeuse, I ran against the fists of Master Rodolphe, who gave me my pay in his own coin. Oh yes! well strung up! he has promised to show me 'ce coup la.'"

"And Bras-Rouge, what sort of a man is he?" asked Tom; "and what kind of goods does he sell?"

"Bras-Rouge? forsooth! he sells everything that is forbidden to be sold, and does everything

that is forbidden to be done: that's his occupation, an't it, Mother Ponisse?" "Oh! he is sharp as a needle," said the Ogresse.

"And he does cheat the custom-house officers finely," answered the Chourineur. "They have pounced more than twenty times into his den, but they never found anything; and, notwithstanding, he often comes out with his little packages."

"It is malicious!" said the Ogresse. "They say that there is a secret passage in his house which leads to the catacombs." "And what is the number of the house?"

"No. 13, Rue aux Fèves: Bras-Rouge—any sort of a merchant—well known in 'la cité,'" said the Chourineur. "I will write his name and address in my note-book. If we cannot find Rodolphe, we will endeavour to get some information concerning him from Monsieur Bras-Rouge," said Tom, writing, as he spoke, in his memorandum-book. "Well, you may pride yourself on having in Monsieur Rodolphe a good friend," said the Chourineur. "Yes, a good fellow; if it had not been for the coalman, he was just about combing the hair of the Maître d'Ecole, whom you see in the corner there with La Chouette. Thunder! I ought to be bound hand and foot, to keep me from exterminating her, the old she-wolf, when I think of what she did to La Goualeuse; but patience, a blow of the fist is never lost, as is said."

"Rodolphe has beaten you? You must hate him," said Sarah. "I hate a man who acted as he did! almost always! Yes, it is droll. Hold! There is the Maître d'Ecole, who has beaten me, and I should rejoice to see him strangled. M. Rodolphe has also beaten me—even harder; but it is just the contrary, I only wish him well. I believe I would go through fire to serve him, and yet I never saw him before to-night." "You say that because we are his friends, 'mon brave.'" "No, thunder! no, 'foi d'homme.' Do you see, he makes the finest blows with his fists; and he does not pride himself on it no more than a child. There's no use of talking—he is a finished master; and when he talks to you so—says such words, that make your heart jump into your throat; and then, when he looks at you—such a look—hold! I have been a trooper—with such a commander—do you see—one would eat the moon and the stars."

Tom and Sarah looked at each other in silence.

"This incredible power of domination will follow him, then, everywhere, and forever," said Sarah, bitterly.

"Yes, until we break the charm," answered Tom.

"Yes; and, whatever may happen, it must be, it must be," said Sarah, passing her hand over her face, as if to conceal some painful emotion.

Midnight struck at the Hôtel de Ville, and the lamp of the tavern shed no longer but a doubtful light. With the exception of the Chourineur and his two companions, the Maître d'Ecole, and La Chouette, all the "habitués" of the tapis-franc had one by one retired. The Maître d'Ecole whispered to Chouette, "Let us go and hide ourselves in the alley opposite: we shall see when our friends come out, and can follow them. If they go to the left, we will wait them at the corner of the 'Rue St. Eloi'; if they turn to the right, we will wait for them at the ruins, near the 'tripeirie'; there is a large hole there, I have an idea." So saying, they advanced

towards the door. "You don't take anything to-night?" said the Ogresse. "No, Mother Ponisse, we only came in for shelter," said the Maître d'Ecole, as he went out with La Chouette.

CHAPTER VII.

YOUR PURSE OR YOUR LIFE.

AT the noise made by the door in closing, Tom and Sarah aroused themselves from their reverie; they thanked the Chourineur for the information he had given, but he inspired them with much less confidence since he had so sincerely but vulgarly expressed such boundless admiration for Rodolphe. As he went out, the wind blew with increased violence, and the rain poured in torrents.

The Maître d'Ecole and Chouette, hidden in the alley opposite, saw the Chourineur when he came out; he turned towards that part of the street where there was a house in process of demolition: soon his footsteps, a little heavy by his frequent libations during the evening, were lost amid the howlings of the wind and the noise of the rain splashing against the walls.

Tom and Sarah left the tavern, notwithstanding the tempest, and took an opposite direction from that of the Chourineur. "They are lost," said the Maître, quietly, to his companion. "Uncork your vitriol—attention!" "Let us take off our shoes, so they can't hear us behind them," said La Chouette. "You are right, La Chouette, always right; I should not have thought of that: let us tread as if on velvet." The horrible couple took off their shoes, gliding along in the shade close to the houses. By this stratagem, the noise of their footsteps was so deadened, that they followed close behind Tom and Sarah without being perceived. "Fortunately, our back is at the corner of the street, or we should be drenched," said Tom. "Are you cold, Sarah?"

"Perhaps we might learn something from this smuggler—this Bras-Rouge," answered Sarah, without replying to his question. Suddenly he stopped; he was not far from the place designated by "Le Maître d'Ecole." "I have mistaken the street," said Tom; "we ought to have turned to the left in coming out of the tavern. I remember a house in ruins that we must pass to find our way: let us go back." The Maître d'Ecole and Chouette sprang in a doorway, to escape recognition; they were so near that Tom and Sarah, in turning, almost elbowed them. "Upon the whole, I'd rather they'd go that way," said the Maître d'Ecole. "If the gentleman kicks—I have another idea."

Tom and Sarah, after having repassed the tapis-franc, drew near a house in ruins; this building being about half demolished, its open vault formed a sort of gulf, extending along the street. The Maître d'Ecole sprang upon his victim with the bound of a tiger, and seizing Tom by the throat, he cried, "Your money, or I'll throw you in this hole." The brigand, pushing him backward, held him, as it were, suspended over the vault, while with the other hand he seized the arm of Sarah as with a vice. In the meanwhile, La Chouette emptied his pockets with marvellous dexterity. Sarah uttered no cry, but said in a calm tone, "Give them your purse, Tom;" and then, addressing the brigand, said, "We will make no noise—do us no harm." The Chouette, after having scrupulously examined the pockets of both the victims, said to Sarah,

"Let me look at your hands, to see if you have any rings. No," said the old woman, grumbling; "then you have no one to give you rings: what misery!" The "sang froid" of Tom did not desert him during this unlooked-for scene.

"Will you make a bargain?" said he. "My portfolio contains papers that will be useless to you; bring them to me to-morrow, and I will give you twenty-five Louis." "Yes, to catch me in a trap," answered the brigand. "Come! clear out, and don't look behind you; you are fortunate in getting off thus." "A moment," said La Chouette; "if he means what he says, there is a way; he shall have his papers." Then addressing Tom, he said, "Do you know the plain of St. Denis?" "Yes." "Do you know where is Saint Ouen?" "Yes." "Well, opposite Saint Ouen, at the end of the road of the Révolte, the country is level, and over the fields one can see for a great distance; do you come there to-morrow alone; bring your money, and you'll find me there with the portfolio—touch and take—I will give it to you."

"But he will mob you, La Chouette!"

"Not such a fool! no he won't; I can see so far. I have only one eye, but it is a good one; if the gentleman brings any one with him, he'll not find any one—I'll be off."

Sarah appeared to be struck with a sudden idea, for she said to the brigand, "Do you want to earn some money?" "Yes." "Did you see in the tavern from whence we have just come—for now I recognise you—did you see the man, the coalman, called out?"

"A slender young man, with mustaches? Yes; I was just going to eat a morsel of that bird, but he didn't give me time, for he stunned me with two such heavy blows; they overturned me on the table—first time it has happened. Oh! I will have revenge!"

"Well! it is concerning him I speak," said Sarah. "Of him?" cried the Maître d'Ecole. "Give me one thousand francs, and I will kill him for you."

"Sarah!" cried Tom, in alarm. "Wretch! I have no idea of having him murdered," said Sarah to the Maître d'Ecole. "What do you want, then?" "Come to-morrow to the plain of St. Denis; you will find my companion there," continued she; "you will find him alone, and he will tell you what I want you to do. It is not one, but two thousand francs I will give you, if you succeed!"

"Fourline," whispered La Chouette, "there is money to be made; these are rich folks, who want something to be done to an enemy; and this enemy is the young cock who wanted to fight you—must go. I'll go in your place. Two thousand balls! my man, that's worth the trouble." "Well, my wife shall go," said the bandit. "You can tell her what is to be done, and I'll see."

"Very well! to-morrow at one o'clock, at the plain of Saint Denis, between Saint Ouen and the road of the Révolte—you understand?" "Yes! you have said it—I'll bring your portfolio." "And you shall have the promised five hundred francs, and something on account of the other business, if you are reasonable." "Now, do you go to the right, we to the left, and don't follow us, unless—" and the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette ran off rapidly. "The devil has come to our assistance," said Sarah. "This bandit may be of use to us." "Sarah, now I am afraid," said Tom. "As for me, I have no fear; on the con-

trary, I hope—but come, come now; I know where we are: the carriage cannot be far off."

The two persons directed their rapid steps towards the square of Notre Dame; but an invisible witness had been present at this scene: it was the Chourineur, who had crouched among the ruins to shelter himself from the fury of the storm. The proposition made by Sarah to the brigand relative to Rodolphe interested the Chourineur very much; alarmed at the dangers which menaced his new friend, he regretted that he did not know how to warn him; his hatred for the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette had, perhaps, something to do with this sentiment. He resolved to advise Rodolphe of the perils which threatened him; but how to do it? He had forgotten the address of the "soi-disant" fan painter, and perhaps he would never revisit the tapis-franc; how should he find him? In making these reflections, the Chourineur had mechanically followed Tom and Sarah, and saw them get into the hack which waited for them at the square of Notre Dame.

The carriage was driven off. A bright idea struck the Chourineur; he sprang behind the vehicle. At one o'clock in the morning the carriage stopped on the boulevard of the "Observatoire," and Tom and Sarah disappeared in one of the small streets which terminate at this place. The night was dark, and the Chourineur could not see anything by which he might recognise the place the next day; so, with the sagacity of an Indian, he drew his knife, and made a profound gash in one of the trees near which the carriage stopped, and then regained his lodging-place, from which he had wandered a considerable distance.

For the first time in a long while the Chourineur enjoyed a sound sleep, which was not interrupted by the vision of the sergeant and the soldiers' "égorgées."

CHAPTER VIII.

PROMENADE.

THE next morning the storm had ceased, and a bright autumnal sun shone out from a cloudless sky, although always gloomy from the height of the houses; the hideous quarter which we have described seemed less horrible when seen by the light of a fine day. Whether Rodolphe feared no longer to meet the two persons whom he had avoided the evening before, or whether he braved them, towards eleven o'clock in the morning he entered the Rue aux Fèves, and turned towards the tavern of the Ogresse. He was still dressed as a workman, yet there was to be remarked in his clothing a certain "recherché;" his new blouse opened on the breast, leaving visible his shirt of red wool, fastened by many silver buttons; the collar of another shirt, of white linen, was tucked negligently over his black cravat, carelessly knotted around his neck; from his light blue velvet cap escaped some curls of chestnut hair; boots perfectly varnished replaced the heavy nailed shoes of the night previous, showing a charming foot, which appeared still smaller as it was half concealed by broad trousers of olive velvet. This costume rather set off the elegant figure of Rodolphe, a rare mixture of grace, activity, and strength.

The Ogresse was strutting up and down before the tapis-franc when Rodolphe appeared.

"Your servant, young man! You have, no doubt, come for your change of the twenty francs?" said she, with a kind of deference, not daring to forget that the conqueror of the Chourineur had thrown upon her counter a "Louis." "There's just seventeen livres ten sous due you; that is not all—some one came to ask after you: a large man well wrapped up; he had on his legs immense boots, like a drum major in citizen's clothes, and on his arm there was a little woman disguised like a man. They drank some of my sealed wine with the Chourineur." "Ah! they drank with the Chourineur; and what did he say to them?" "When I say they drank, I am mistaken; they only wet their lips in their glasses, and—" "I ask you what they said to the Chourineur?" "Oh! they spoke to him about one thing and another—Bras-Rouge, the rain, and fine weather." "Did they know Bras-Rouge?" "On the contrary, the Chourineur explained to them who he was, and how you came to have a fight." "Never mind, I don't care about that." "You want your change?" "Yes; and I intend to take La Goualeuse to pass the day in the country." "Oh! impossible, 'mon garçon.'"

"Why?" "She'd never come back. Her clothes belong to me, without reckoning that she owes me two hundred and twenty francs for board and lodgings since she has been with me. If she was not just as honest as she is, I would never let her go out of my sight, unless—"

"The Goualeuse owes you two hundred and twenty francs?" "Two hundred and twenty francs and ten sous; but what are you going to do, 'mon garçon?' you don't say you are going to pay it? playing, my lord!" "Hold!" said Rodolphe, throwing eleven "Louis" on the counter. "Now how much do you ask for the clothing you hire her?"

The amazed old woman scrutinized the "Louis" closely, one after the other. "Come, come! do you think I would give you bad money? send and get it changed, and let us finish. How much do you ask for the clothing?" The Ogresse, divided between the desire of making a good bargain, the astonishment at seeing a workman with so much money, and the fear of being duped, remained silent for a moment, when she cried,

"Her dress is worth at least—a hundred francs." "Such rags? Come, come! you shall keep the change you owe me from yesterday, and I will add a Louis, nothing more. To ransom anything from you is to steal from the poor who have a right to alms."

"Very well! 'mon garçon, I'll keep my clothes; out of this La Goualeuse shall not stir; I am free to do with my effects as I please." "May Lucifer burn you one of these days, according to your deserts! here is your money; go and call La Goualeuse."

The Ogresse pocketed the money, thinking that the workman had stolen or inherited it; she said to him with an ignoble smirk, "Why don't you go and call her yourself, my son? that will give her pleasure; for, on the faith of Mother Ponisse, she looked sweetly on you yesterday!"

"Go and seek her, and say that I will take her to the country; not a word more. Above all, I do not wish her to know that I have paid her debt." "Why not?" "What is it your business?" "Very well, I'd rather she should think that she is still under my clutches." "Will you be silent? will you seek her?"

"Oh! what a wicked look! I pity those you command—alone—I go, I go."

The Ogresse went up, and in a few minutes descended. "The Goualeuse will not believe me; she became as red as crimson when I told her you were here; but when I told her that I would allow her to pass the day in the country, I thought she would have become mad; for the first time in her life, she seemed about to throw her arms around my neck." "It was for joy at leaving you."

At this moment Fleur de Marie entered, dressed as she was the evening previous; she blushed on seeing Rodolphe, and cast her eyes down in a confused manner. "Will you come and pass the day with me in the country, my child?" said Rodolphe. "Willingly, Mr. Rodolphe, since madame allows it." "I allow it, my little kitten, on account of your good conduct; come and embrace me," said the old wretch, holding out her pimpled face.

The unfortunate girl, surmounting her repugnance, approached her forehead to the lips of the Ogresse, but with a violent blow with his elbow, Rodolphe pushed the old woman into her bar, and taking the arm of Fleur de Marie, he went out of the tapis-franc amid the curses of Mother Ponisse. "Take care, Monsieur Rodolphe," said La Goualeuse; "the Ogresse is going to throw something at your head; she is wicked enough." "Oh, never mind, my child; but what is the matter with you? you seem embarrassed—sad? are you sorry to come with me?" "On the contrary; but you give me your arm." "Well!" "You are a workman; some one may say to your master that he met you with me; that may do you harm: they don't approve of such company," said she, gently disengaging her arm from that of Rodolphe. "Go on alone; I will follow you to the 'Varrière;' when once in the country, I will join you." "Fear nothing," said Rodolphe, touched by this delicacy, and retaking the arm of Fleur de Marie. "My master does not reside in this quarter; and, besides, I am going to find a carriage on the 'Quai aux Fleurs.'" "As you please, Monsieur Rodolphe; I only said that to prevent you getting in trouble." "I believe you, and I thank you; but answer me frankly: Is it equally agreeable to what part of the country we go?" "Oh! it is all the same to me, Monsieur Rodolphe, as long as it is the country—it is so pleasant—the pure air is so good to breathe! Do you know that for five months I have been no farther than the flower-market? and if the Ogresse allowed me to go out of the cité, it was because she had confidence in me."

"And when you came to this market, was it to buy flowers?" "Oh no; I had no money; I only came to see them, to inhale their rich perfume; for the half hour that the Ogresse allowed me to pass on the 'Quai' during market-days, I was so happy that I forgot all." "And when you returned to the Ogresse, to those horrid streets?" "I came back more sorrowful than when I set out. I choked down my tears to prevent a beating. I'll tell you what it was at the market that made me very envious, oh! very envious. It was to see the little 'ouvrières,' so neatly clad, going off so gayly with a fine pot of flowers in their arms." "I am sure, if you had only had some flowers in your window, they would have been companions for you." "It is very true, what you say, Monsieur Rodolphe. Imagine; one day, the Ogresse, at her 'tête,

knowing my taste, gave me a little rosebush: if you could only know how happy I was! I was no longer lonesome! I could not keep from looking at my rosebush. I amused myself in counting its leaves, its flowers. But the air is so bad in 'la cité,' that at the end of two days it began to fade; but you'll laugh at me, Mr. Rodolphe." "No, no; go on."

"Well, then, I asked permission from the Ogresse to take my bush out for an airing; yes, as I would have taken out a child. I brought it to the 'quai'; I thought to myself, that being in company with other flowers, in this fine and balmy air, would do it good; I moistened its poor withered leaves with the pure water of the fountain, and then I warmed it awhile in the sun; dear little rose-tree, it never saw the sun in 'la cité,' for in our street it comes no lower than the roof. At length I returned; and I assure you, Monsieur Rodolphe, that my rosebush lived, perhaps, ten days longer than it would have done without the airings." "I believe it; but when it died, that must have been a great loss for you?"

"I wept for it—I was very sorry. Besides, Monsieur Rodolphe, since you understand how one can love flowers, I can tell it to you; well! I felt grateful to it—ah! now, this time you are laughing at me." "No, no! I love, I adore flowers; thus I can comprehend all the 'folies' they cause one to do, or that they inspire."

"Eh bien! I felt grateful to this poor rosebush for having flowered so prettily for me—such a one as me." The Goualeuse held down her head, and became purple with shame. "Poor child, with this consciousness of your horrible position, you must have often—"

"Had a wish to put an end to it; is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" said La Goualeuse, interrupting her companion. "Oh! yes, more than once I have looked at the Seine from the parapet; but then I turned to the flowers, the sun; I said to myself, the river will always be there—I am only sixteen—who knows?"

"When you said, who knows? you had a hope?" "Yes." "And what did you hope for?"

"I do not know—I hoped—yes, I hoped 'malgré moi.' At those moments it seemed to me that my fate was not merited; that there was some good left in me. I said to myself, I have been very much troubled, but at least I have never harmed any one. If I had only had some one to counsel me, I should not be where I am. That dissipated my sorrow a little. After all, I must confess that these thoughts occurred oftener after the loss of my rosebush," added La Goualeuse in a solemn manner, which made Rodolphe smile.

"This great grief always—yes, look here," and the Goualeuse drew from her pocket a little wooden packet, carefully made, and tied with a pink favor. "You have preserved it?"

"I think so; it is all that I possess in the world." "How? have you nothing you can call your own?" "Nothing." "But this coral necklace?" "It belongs to the Ogresse."

"How? do you not own a rag, a hat, a handkerchief?" "No, nothing, nothing but the dry leaves of my withered rose-bush. It is on this account I prize it so much."

At each word, the astonishment of Rodolphe was redoubled; he could not comprehend this frightful slavery, this horrible sale of soul and body for a wretched shelter, some tattered clothes, and a nourishment impure.

They arrived at the "Quai aux Fleurs;" a

carriage was waiting; Rodolphe assisted his companion to get in, and, after placing himself by her side, said to the coachman, "To St. Denis; I will tell you directly which road to take."

The horses started; the sun was radiant, the sky without a cloud, but the cold was a little sharp, and the air circulated briskly through the open windows of the carriage. "Hold, a woman's cloak?" said La Goualeuse, remarking that she was seated on such a garment, which she had not before perceived. "Yes, it is for you, my child; I brought it along, fearing you might be cold; wrap yourself up well." Unaccustomed to any such care, the poor girl looked at Rodolphe with astonishment. The species of intimidation this latter had caused her increased each moment, as also a vague sadness she could not account for.

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe, how kind you are! you make me quite ashamed."

"Because I am kind?" "No; but—it seems to me that you no longer speak as you did yesterday—that you are some other—"

"Come, Fleur de Marie, would you rather I should be the Rodolphe of yesterday or the Rodolphe of to-day?" "I like you more as you are to-day; yet yesterday I seemed to be more your equal." Then, fearing she had mortified Rodolphe, she added, "When I say your equal, Monsieur Rodolphe, I know that that cannot be."

"There is one thing in you that surprises me, Fleur de Marie." "What is that, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "You seem to forget that La Chouette told you yesterday she knew your parents—that she knew your mother."

"Oh! I have not forgotten that; I thought of it all night, and I have wept bitterly; but I am sure it is not true. The Borgnesse invented this story to give me pain."

"It may be that La Chouette knows more than you imagine; if it is so, would you not be happy to find your mother?"

"Alas! Monsieur Rodolphe, if my mother never loved me, what good would it be to find her? She would not only not see me—what a disgrace it would be to her! it would perhaps kill her."

"If your mother loved you, Fleur de Marie, she would pity you, she would pardon you, she would love you again. If she has forsaken you, in seeing to what a horrible fate her actions have reduced you, her shame would be your revenge."

"And why should I be revenged? If I were revenged, it seems to me that I should no longer have the right to consider myself unfortunate; this often consoles me."

"Perhaps you are right; let us speak no more about it."

At this moment the carriage arrived near "St. Ouen," at the junction of the road to St. Denis and the "Chemin de la Révolte."

Notwithstanding the monotonous appearance of the country, Fleur de Marie was so delighted at seeing the fields, as she said, that, forgetting the sad thoughts which the recollections of Chouette had awakened in her mind, her charming face brightened up; she leaned out of the windows, and clapping her hands, cried, "Monsieur Rodolphe, what delight—fields! and thickets! If you would only let me alight—the weather is so fine! I would like so much to run in the meadows!"

"We will take a run, my child. Coachman, stop!"

"How! you also, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"I also? yes, we will make it a holiday."

"What happiness, Monsieur Rodolphe!"

And Rodolphe and Fleur de Marie, hand in hand, ran over the new-mown field until they were out of breath.

To attempt to describe the gambols, the little joyous shouts, the delight of Fleur de Marie, would be impossible. Poor Gazelle! for so long time a prisoner. She breathed the pure air with intoxication; she came, she went, she ran, she stopped, always with fresh transports. At the sight of several tufts of daisies, and some marigolds, spared by the first frost of approaching winter, she could not refrain from new exclamations of delight; she did not leave one of the flowers, but gleaned the whole meadow. After having thus ran over the fields, soon tired, being unaccustomed to so much exercise, the young girl, stopping to take breath, went and seated herself on the trunk of a tree, overturned near a deep ditch.

The fair and transparent complexion of Fleur de Marie, ordinarily too pale, was now heightened with the most lively colour. Her large blue eyes shone sweetly, her rosy mouth half open, disclosed her pearl-like teeth, and her heart throbbed under the little orange shawl; she kept one hand on her bosom, as if to compress its pulsations, while with the other she extended to Rodolphe the flowers she had gathered. Nothing could be more charming than the innocent, joyous expression which shone on this lovely face. As soon as she could speak, she said to Rodolphe, with touching "naïveté,"

"How good is the 'Bon Dieu' for having given us such a fine day!" A tear came to the eyes of Rodolphe at hearing this poor, abandoned, despised, lost creature, without home, without bread, offering thus a cry of joy and thanks to the Creator, because she enjoyed a ray of sunshine and the sight of a meadow.

Rodolphe was aroused from his meditations by an unlooked-for incident.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE.

THE Goualeuse was seated, as we have said, on the trunk of a tree, which had been overturned near a deep ditch. Suddenly a man, shaking off the straw with which he was covered, rose out of this excavation, with a terrible shout of laughter. Fleur de Marie, turning around, screamed with affright. It was the Chourineur. "Don't be afraid, my dear," said the Chourineur, seeing the terror of the young girl, who had immediately flown to the side of her companion. "Here is a lucky meeting, hein! Master Rodolphe, you didn't expect it! nor I neither;" then adding, in a serious tone, "Look here, master, do you see, people may say what they please, but there is something in the air—above—over our heads—'le bon Dieu' is a 'malin'—it seems as if he says to man, Go, I order you; for he has ordered you here, which is most wonderfully astonishing!" "What are you doing there?" said Rodolphe, very much surprised. "I was watching the corn for you, my master; but thunder! what a farce that you should come, just in the very environs of my country-house—hold! there is something—decidedly there is something in it." "But once

more, I ask you, what are you doing there?" "Directly you shall know all about it; just give time to take an observation from your observatory 'à cheval.'" He ran towards the carriage, then stopped, and took a rapid glance over the immense plains, and quietly returned to Rodolphe.

"Will you explain to me what all this means?" "Patience! patience! master—one word; what o'clock is it?" "Half past twelve," said Rodolphe, looking at his watch. "Good—we have time; La Chouette will not be here for a half hour!" "La Chouette!" cried Rodolphe and the young girl at the same time. "Yes, La Chouette. In two words, master, here is my story: yesterday, after you left the tapis-franc, there came—"

"A large man, accompanied by a woman disguised as a man; they asked for me; I know all that. Afterward?" "They asked me to drink, and wanted to talk about you. I wasn't willing to say anything—as you had not told me anything, except the 'rinsing' you had the politeness to give me. I knew none of your secrets; and even if I had known anything, it would have been the same—it is between us, you know, Master Rodolphe—thine till death. May the devil burn me if I can tell why I feel for you the same attachment that a bulldog has for his master; but it is all the same—so it is—it is too much for me—I can't understand it—I leave it to you."

"I thank you, mon garçon;" but continue." "The large man and the little woman, finding they could get nothing out of me, went out from the Ogresse, and so did I—they towards the 'Palais de Justice, I towards 'Nôtre Dame.' Arrived at the end of the street, I began to perceive that it was raining pitchforks—a perfect deluge! There was quite near an old, half-torn-down house; I said to myself, If the shower continues, I can sleep as well there as at my lodgings; so I crept into a sort of cellar, where I was sheltered. I made my bed on a beam, my pillow of some old plaster, and there I was lodged like a king." "Afterward—afterward?" "We had drank together, Master Rodolphe, and then I had drank with the large man and the little woman; I mean to tell you that I had my head a little heavy; and, besides, there is nothing that rocks me to sleep like the dropping of rain. I began to doze; I had not been long asleep, when a voice suddenly awoke me: it was the Maître d'Ecole, who was closely talking with some one. I listened—thunder!—what do I recognise? the voice of the large man, who had come to the tapis-franc, with the little woman disguised."

"They were talking with the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette!" said Rodolphe, stupefied. "Yes! and they agreed to meet again to-day." "To-day!" said Rodolphe. "At one o'clock." "It will be in a minute!" "At the branching off of the Route St. Denis and La Révolte." "This very spot!" "As you say, Master Rodolphe—it is here!" "The Maître d'Ecole! take care, Monsieur Rodolphe," cried Fleur de Marie. "Be calm, my dear—he is not coming—only La Chouette." "How did this man become acquainted with these two wretches?" asked Rodolphe. "Ma foi! I know nothing about that; besides, I must have got awake

just at the end of matters; for the large man spoke of ransoming his portfolio, which La Chouette was to bring here, in exchange for five hundred francs; I rather think that the Maître d'Ecole must have begun by robbing, and ended by making friends." "That is strange." "Mon Dieu! that frightens me for you, Monsieur Rodolphe," said Fleur de Marie. "Master Rodolphe is not a child, my dear, but, as you say, it may be something disagreeable for him—so here am I."

"Continue, 'mon garçon.'" "The large man and the small woman promised two thousand francs to the Maître d'Ecole—to do to you—I don't know what; it is La Chouette who is to come here, to bring back the portfolio, and to know what they want; and then she is to go back to the Maître d'Ecole, who will do the rest."

Fleur de Marie trembled; but Rodolphe smiled disdainfully. "Two thousand francs for doing something to you, Master Rodolphe; that made me think (no comparisons) that when I see a reward of five hundred francs offered for a lost dog, I say modestly to myself, Oh, you are a lost animal, for they would not give even five francs to get you. Two thousand francs for doing something to you! Who are you, then?" "I will tell you by-and-by." "Enough, master. When I heard this proposition made to La Chouette, I said to myself, I must find out where these rich folks, who want to set the Maître d'Ecole on the tracks of M. Rodolphe, roost; it may serve him. When they went off, I crept out of the ruins and followed them like a wolf. At Notre Dame they got into a carriage; I clambered up behind, and thus we drove to the 'Boulevard de l'Observatoire.' It was as black as a furnace; I could see nothing; so I made a notch in one of the trees, that I could recognise it in the daytime." "Very well! mon garçon."

"This morning I returned there. At ten steps from my tree I saw a small lane shut by a gate; in the mud of the lane I saw large steps and small ones; at the end of the lane a house; the nest of our birds must be there."

"Thank you, 'mon brave,' you render me, without suspecting it, a great service." "Pardon me, Master Rodolphe, but I did suspect—it was for this I did it." "I know it, 'mon garçon,' and I wish I could recompense your services otherwise than by thanks; unfortunately, I am only a poor devil of a workman, although they will give, as you say, two thousand francs to do something to me. I will explain that to you." "Good, if it pleases you; if not, all the same; they threaten you with some harm, I oppose it: the rest is none of my business."

"I imagine what they want: listen; I have a secret for cutting the iron for my fans by machinery; but this secret does not belong to me alone; I await my partner to put this in operation, and it certainly must be the model that I have at home that they wish to get hold of, at any price; for there is much money to be made by this discovery." "The tall man and his companion are, then—" "The people for whom I work, and to whom I would not sell my secret." This explanation appeared satisfactory to the Chourineur, whose intelligence was not singularly developed, and he continued:

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"I understand now—only see what cowards they have not the courage to do their dirty work themselves. But to put an end to my story, I said to myself this morning, I know the 'rendezvous' of these people; I'll go and see what they are going to do. My employer will wait for me—no matter. I arrived here—I saw this hole—I took an armful of straw from yonder, and I covered myself to the end of my nose, to wait for La Chouette; but, behold, you make your appearance on the platform, and this poor Goualeuse comes and takes a seat just on the border of my park; 'ma foi,' I wanted to have some fun, so I cried like a 'brûlé,' and rose up from my litter."

"Well! and now what is your intention?" "Wait for La Chouette, who will certainly arrive first, and try to hear what she will say to the large man, because perhaps it may serve you. There is no other tree overturned in the whole field; from this place one can see all around; it is as if it were made expressly that one might take a seat. The 'rendezvous' of La Chouette is only four steps from this, at the branching of the roads; I'd bet that they would come and sit here; if they don't, and I can't hear what they have to say, when they separate I'll fall upon La Chouette, and I'll pay her what is her due for taking out the tooth of the poor Goualeuse, and I'll squeeze her throat until she tell me the name of the parents of the poor girl. What do you think of my plan, Master Rodolphe?" "There are some good ideas 'mon garçon,' but I will suggest some alterations."

"Oh! in the first place, Chourineur, you must not quarrel on my account. If you strike La Chouette, the Maître d'Ecole—"

"Stop, my dear. La Chouette must pass through my hands. Thunder! it is just because she has the Maître d'Ecole to defend her that I'll double the dose."

"Listen, 'mon garçon.' Have a better plan to revenge La Goualeuse for the cruel treatment of La Chouette. I will tell you what this is later. As for the present," said Rodolphe, retreating a few steps from the side of La Goualeuse, and lowering his voice, "as for the present, do you wish to render me a real service?" "Speak, Master Rodolphe."

"The Chouette does not know you."

"I saw her yesterday at the tapis-franc for the first time."

"Now this is what you must do: you will conceal yourself at first; but when you see her arrive here, you must come out of you retreat."

"To wring her neck?"

"No, no, not now! I only wish you to prevent her speaking with this man; seeing some one with her, he will not dare to approach. If he does, do not leave her for a moment; he cannot make his propositions before you."

"If the man finds me too inquisitive, I'll do his business; he is neither a Maître d'Ecole nor a Master Rodolphe."

"I know the citizen; he will not meddle with you."

"Well, well! I'll stick to La Chouette like a shadow. The man shan't say a word that I don't hear, and he'll have to make tracks."

"If they agree upon another place of meeting, you will know it, or your presence will suffice to send off the gentleman."

"Good, good. Afterward I shall give a small twist to La Chouette! I hold to that bet."

"Not yet. La Borgnesse does not know whether you are a robber or not?"

"No, unless the Maître d'Ecole may have told her that it was not according to my ideas."

"If he has told her so, you must pretend to have changed your principles."

"I!" "You!"

"Thunder! Master Rodolphe; but say—hum! hum! I don't like that play."

"You shall do as you like; you shall see if I propose anything infamous to you."

"Oh! as for that, I am quite easy."

"You are right."

"Speak, master; I'll obey."

"As soon as the man is gone, you must try to coax La Chouette."

"I! the old she-devil! I'd much rather fight the Maître d'Ecole. I hardly know whether I shall be able to keep from clawing right hold of her hide."

"Then you will spoil all."

"Well, what is it, then, that I must do?"

"The 'Chouette' will be outrageous at the windfall that has escaped her; you must try to soothe her, by saying that you know of some good business to be done; that you are there waiting for your accomplice; and that, if the Maître d'Ecole has a mind to join, there is a good deal of gold to be gained."

"I listen; go on, master."

"After waiting about an hour, you must say, 'My comrade does not come, it is put off;' then you must agree upon a 'rendezvous' for to-morrow at an early hour with La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole. Do you understand?" "I comprehend."

"And this night you will be at the corner of the Champs Elysées and the Allée des Veuves; I will meet you there, and I will then tell you the rest."

"If it is a snare, take care! The Maître d'Ecole is an evil spirit; you have struck him: there is no doubt; he is capable of killing you."

"Be not alarmed."

"Thunder! it is a farce; but you do with me just as you please; there is no difficulty, and something seems to tell me that there is some nice broth to be cooked for the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette; yet, one word more, Master Rodolphe." "Speak."

"It is not that I think you capable of setting a trap for the Maître d'Ecole, to have him caught by the police; he is a finished scoundrel, who has merited death a hundred times—but to have him arrested—it is not my business."

"Nor mine, 'mon garçon;' but I have an account to settle with him and La Chouette, since they are plotting with people against me; and with your assistance, we'll have a settlement."

"Oh! well, since the male is no better than the female, I consent."

"And if we succeed," said Rodolphe, in a serious, almost solemn manner, which startled the Chourineur, "you will be as proud as when you saved from the fire and water the man and woman who owe you their life!"

"How you say that, Master Rodolphe! I never saw you look so before; but quick, quick, I see a white spot; it must be the cap of La Chouette. Go; I'll creep into my hole."

"To-night at ten o'clock."

"At the corner of the 'Allée des Veuves' and the Champ Elysées; understood."

Fleur de Marie had not heard this last conversation of the Chourineur and Rodolphe; she got into the carriage with her companion."

CHAPTER X.

THE FARM.

AFTER his conversation with the Chourineur, Rodolphe remained for some moments preoccupied and thoughtful.

Fleur de Marie, not daring to interrupt the silence of her companion, looked at him sorrowfully.

Rodolphe, raising his head, said to her, smiling kindly, "What were you thinking about, my child? The meeting with the Chourineur has been disagreeable to you, has it not? We were so merry."

"It is, on the contrary, fortunate for us, Monsieur Rodolphe, since the Chourineur can be useful to you." "Does this man pass among the 'habitués' of the tapis-franc as, being any better than the rest, having any good qualities?"

"I am ignorant, Monsieur Rodolphe; before the scene of yesterday, I have often seen him, but have rarely spoken to him. I thought him as wicked as the rest."

"Let us think no more about all this, my little Fleur de Marie. I should be very sorry if you became sad—I, who thought to make you pass a pleasant day."

"Oh! I am very happy! it is such a long time since I have been out of Paris!"

"Not since your parties with La Rigolette?"

"Mon Dieu! no, Monsieur Rodolphe. Then it was spring; but although we are almost now into winter, it gives me just as much pleasure. What a fine sunny day! Only look at those little rosy clouds there—and that hill! with its pretty white houses in the midst of the trees. How many leaves remain! it is astonishing in the month of November, is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe? But in Paris the leaves fall so soon; and down there—that flight of pigeons—look! look! they are settling down on the roof of the mill. In the country one is never tired of looking; everything is amusing."

"It is a pleasure to see how you are delighted with these nothings, which make the charm of the country, Fleur de Marie."

And, in effect, as the young girl contemplated the peaceful and smiling landscape which was spread around her, once more her face resumed its soft expression.

"And there, that fire from the stubble in the field, see how the beautiful white smoke ascends to heaven! and this cart, with its two fat grays. If I were a man, I would like to be a farmer! to be in the midst of a large field, following the plough, and seeing at a great distance immense woods. Just such a day as to-day, for instance! enough to make one sing songs, rather melancholy songs, to bring tears into the eyes—like 'Genevieve de Brabant.' Did you ever hear the song of 'Genevieve de Brabant,' Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"No, my child; but if you are kind you will sing it for me when we get to the farm."

"What happiness! Are we going to a farm, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Tis to a farm belonging to my nurse, a good and worthy woman, who has educated me."

"And shall we have some milk?" cried La Goualeuse, clasping her hands.

"Fy, then! milk—excellent cream, if you please, and some butter that shall be made before us, and fresh eggs."

"That we shall take from the nests ourselves!"

"Certainly." "And we will go and see the cows in the stable?" "I guess so." "And we will go into the dairy?" "Yes, in the dairy." "And to the pigeon-house?" "And to the pigeon-house."

"Ah! stop, Monsieur Rodolphe; it is not to be believed: how I am going to be amused! What a delightful day! what a delightful day I am going to pass!" cried the young girl, joyously.

Then, by a sudden change of thought, the unfortunate girl, thinking that, after these hours of liberty passed in the country, she must return to her horrid dwelling-place, concealed her face in her hands and burst into tears.

Rodolphe, much surprised, said to her,

"What is the matter, Fleur de Marie! what causes your grief?"

"Nothing—nothing, Monsieur Rodolphe," said she, wiping her eyes, and trying to smile.

"Pardon me if I become sad—pay no attention, there is nothing the matter; it was only a thought. I am going to be gay."

"But you were so joyous just now!"

"It was on that account," naively answered Fleur de Marie, lifting her eyes to Rodolphe, yet moistened with tears.

These words enlightened Rodolphe; he guessed all, and willing to drive away the gloomy thought of the young girl, he said, smiling,

"I bet you are thinking about your rose-bush! You are sorry that you could not take it with you to the farm for an airing. Poor rose-bush; no doubt you would have wished to make it eat some cream!"

La Goualeuse laughed at this pleasantry, and soon every trace of sorrow vanished from her brow.

As the carriage approached Saint Denis the tall spire of the church became visible.

"Oh! the beautiful steeple!" cried La Goualeuse.

"It is the steeple of the Church of Saint Denis—a superb church: do you want to see it? I will stop the carriage." She cast down her eyes, and said, "Since I have lived with the Ogresse I have not been within the walls of a church; I have not dared. In the prison, on the contrary, I loved so dearly to sing at mass! and at the Fête Dieu we always made such beautiful bouquets for the altar!"

"But God is good and merciful: why do you fear to enter and pray in a church?"

"Oh! no, no, Monsieur Rodolphe, it would be impious; it is enough to have offended the 'bon Dieu' otherwise."

After a moment of silence, Rodolphe said,

"To the present, have you ever loved?"

"Never, Monsieur Rodolphe." "How comes that?"

"You have seen what kind of people frequent

ed the tapis-franc; besides, to love, one must be honnête." "What do you mean by that?"

"To depend on one's self—to be able—but, indeed, Monsieur Rodolphe, if you please, let us not talk about this." "Well! come, let us talk of something else, Fleur de Marie; but why do you look at me thus! now see, your beautiful eyes are filled again with tears: have I vexed you?" "No! on the contrary; but you are so good to me, that makes me feel like crying; and then, one would think that you had only brought me to the country just to please me, so contented you appear with my delight. Not content with having defended me yesterday, you make me pass such a delightful day with you."

"Truly, you are happy!"

"For a long time, I shall never forget this pleasure."

"Pleasure is so seldom found!" "Oh! yes, very seldom." "Ma foi, in default of that which I have not, I often amuse myself in thinking what I should like to have; I say to myself, there, that's what I should like—that's what I want; and you, Fleur de Marie, have you such dreams sometimes! do you build castles in the air?" "Formerly, yes, in prison; before I went to the Ogresse, I passed my life in that and singing; but now, not so often. And you, Monsieur Rodolphe, what is it you wish for?"

"I! oh! I want to be very rich—to have servants, horses, carriages, a fine house, and to go into society—every day to the play. And you, Fleur de Marie?" "I should not be so difficult: enough to pay my debt to the Ogresse, some money to support me until I could find work, and a nice little clean room, where I could see the trees when I worked."

"And plenty of flowers in your window!"

"Oh! certainly. To dwell in the country, if I could, and that is all."

"A small room for work is a necessity; but when one has only to wish, one can allow some superfluities. Have you never wished for carriages, diamonds, fine dresses?"

"Oh no! I never had any such wishes—to be free, live in the country, and to be sure that I should not die in a hospital. Oh this last—above all, not to die there. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, this thought often comes to me—it is frightful!" "Alas! we poor folks." "It is not on account of misery that I say this; but after—when one is dead—"

"Well!" "Do you not know what is done with you after death, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"No." "There was a young girl that I knew in prison—she died at the hospital, and they gave her body to the surgeons," whispered the young girl, shuddering. "Oh! this is horrible! And have you often had such gloomy thoughts, poor child?"

"It astonishes you, does it not, Monsieur Rodolphe, that I should feel any shame! for, after my death—Alas! mon Dieu! it is all they have left me."

These sad and bitter words affected Rodolphe; he concealed his face in his hands, and thought of the fatality which had pressed on Fleur de Marie; he thought of the mother of the poor creature—her mother—was she rich, happy, perhaps honoured!

Honoured—rich—happy; and her child, whom she had doubtless sacrificed to shame, had left the hovel of La Chouette for the prison, the prison for the den of the Ogresse; and from this she might go to die in a hospital; and after her death—It was frightful.

The poor Goualeuse, seeing the gloomy air of her companion, said to him, sorrowfully, "Pardon me, Monsieur Rodolphe; I ought not to have such ideas. You take me with you to make me joyful, and yet I am always telling you such sad things—so sad! Mon Dieu! I do not know how it happens; it is in spite of myself. I have never been happier than I have to-day, yet the tears are constantly coming to my eyes. You don't like it, Monsieur Rodolphe! besides, you see, this sadness goes away as it comes—very quick. Now see, already I think no more about it. I will be reasonable—there, Monsieur Rodolphe, look at my eyes."

And Fleur de Marie, after having shut her eyes two or three times, to chase away a rebel tear, opened them wide, and looked at Rodolphe with charming naïveté. "Fleur de Marie, I beg you not to restrain yourself. Be gay if you wish to be gay—sorrowful if you wish to be sorrowful. Mon Dieu! I who speak to you sometimes have gloomy thoughts. I should indeed be very unhappy to feign a joy I do not feel."

"Truly, Monsieur Rodolphe, are you sad sometimes?"

"Without doubt; the future appears no clearer for me than for you. I have no father nor mother; were I to fall sick to-morrow, how should I live? I spend that which I gain as fast as it is earned."

"You are wrong, do you see, very wrong, Monsieur Rodolphe," said the Goualeuse, in a tone of grave remonstrance, which made Rodolphe smile; "you ought to put something in the Savings' Bank; for all my troubles came from not economizing my money. With two hundred francs before him, a workman would never be an expense to any one—never embarrassed; and it is often these embarrassments which give you bad counsels." "All this is very wise, very sensible, my little monitress. But two hundred francs! how is one to earn two hundred francs?"

"Oh! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is very simple; let us reckon a little; you shall see. You gain sometimes five francs a day?" "Yes, when I work."

"But you must work every day. Are you to be pitied? such fine work as yours—fine painter; why it ought to be a pleasure. Come, you are not reasonable, Monsieur Rodolphe," added La Goualeuse, in a solemn manner. "A workman ought to live, nay, can live, very well on three francs; then you would have two francs left—at the end of the month sixty—sixty francs a month—quite an amount!"

"Yes; but it is so agreeable to walk about, to do nothing!"

"Monsieur Rodolphe, once more, you have no more reason than a child." "Well! I will be reasonable, you little scold; you have given me some new ideas. I never thought of it."

"Truly!" cried the young girl, clapping her hands with joy; "if you only knew how hap-

py you make me! You, will then, economize the two francs a day, surely?" "Come, I will do it," said Rodolphe, smiling in spite of himself.

"You'll see how proud you'll be at your first savings; and, besides, this is not all; if you promise you will not be angry—"

"Do I look as if I could be angry?"

"No, certainly not; but I do not know if I ought to—"

"You ought to say everything to me, Fleur de Marie."

"Well! then, you, who, it is plain to be seen, are above your condition—how is it that you can frequent a tavern like that of the Ogresse?"

"If I had not been to the tapis-franc, I should not have the pleasure of taking you to the country to-day."

"It is true; but never mind, Monsieur Rodolphe. I am as happy as possible with my excursion. Well, I would renounce, with all my heart, passing such another, if it can do you any harm."

"Just the contrary, for you have given me such excellent advice about my affairs."

"And you will follow it?"

"I have promised you on my word of honour; I will economize at least forty sous a day."

CHAPTER XI.

THE WISHES.

At this moment, Rodolphe said to the coachman, who had passed the village of Sarcelles, "Take the first road to the right, pass through Villiers-le-Bel, and then to the left; keep straight on." Then addressing La Goualeuse, he said, "Now that you are satisfied with me, Fleur de Marie, we can amuse ourselves, as we said just now, by building castles in the air; it won't cost much, so you can't scold me for being extravagant."

"Oh no. You begin—you build your castles first."

"On the contrary, I must have you commence."

"Let me see if you can guess what my choice would be, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"I'll try. I will suppose that this road—I say this road, because we are on it."

"Oh, yes! that is right; there's no use in looking farther."

"I'll suppose, then, that this road will lead us to a charming village, some distance from the main road."

"Yes, it will be more quiet and tranquil."

"It is built on a rising ground, and surrounded by trees."

"And there's a little streamlet close by?"

"Exactly so—a streamlet. At the end of the village there is a beautiful farm; on one side of the house is an orchard; on the other a pretty garden filled with flowers."

"I can almost see it, Monsieur Rodolphe!"

"On the ground floor, there is a large kitchen for the labourers on the farm, and an eating-room for the mistress." "The house must have green blinds; they look so cheerful, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Green blinds—I am of your opinion; there is nothing so lively as green blinds. Naturally, the mistress of the farm would be your aunt."

"Oh! naturally. And she would be a kind, good woman."

"Excellent woman, who would love you as a mother."

"Good aunt! that must be so delightful, to be loved by some one!" "And you would love her also?"

"Oh!" cried Fleur de Marie, joining her hands, and lifting her eyes towards heaven with an expression of happiness impossible to describe. "Oh! yes. I would love her, and, besides, I would aid her with her work—to sew, wash, bleach—to dry fruits for the winter, enough for the whole household. She should not complain of my idleness, I assure you. The morning—"

"Stop, stop! Fleur de Marie; how impatient you are. Let me finish describing the house."

"Come, come, Monsieur Painter, it is easy to perceive that you are accustomed to make pretty landscapes on your fans," said the Goualeuse, laughing.

"Little prattler, let me, then, finish my house."

"It is true that I do prattle; but it is so amusing! Monsieur Rodolphe, I will listen: pray finish your house." "Your room shall be on the first floor." "My room! oh, delightful. Come, let us see my room." And the young girl leaned against Rodolphe, with her large eyes wide open, very curious.

"Your chamber shall have two windows, which look upon the flower-garden and on the meadow through which the little river flows. On the other side of this river will be seen a little hill, all planted with chestnut-trees, from the midst of which peeps the spire of a church." "Oh! how pretty—how pretty, Monsieur Rodolphe; it makes one desire to be there!"

"Three or four fine cows are grazing in the meadow, which is separated from the garden by a hedge of hawthorn." "And do I see the cows from my window?" "Perfectly." "Then there shall be one which shall be my favourite, Monsieur Rodolphe. I'll make her a fine collar with a bell, and I'll accustom her to come and eat from my hands."

"She won't fail. She is very young, and pure white, and we'll call her Musette."

"Ah! what a pretty name; poor Musette! I love her already." "Let us finish your chamber, Fleur de Marie: it is hung with a pretty Persian chints, with curtains to match. A honeysuckle and rosebush cover the walls of the house on this side, and hang over your windows, so that in the morning you have only to stretch out your hands and gather the fragrant blossoms." "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, what a painter you are!" "Now we'll see how you will pass the day. Your good aunt will come and awaken you in the morning by a gentle kiss on the forehead; she will bring you a bowl of warm milk, because your chest is weak, poor child! Then you'll get up; you'll go and see the farm, Musette, the chickens, your friends the pigeons, and the flowers in the garden. At nine o'clock your writing-master will arrive."

"My master?"

"You know you must learn to read, write,

and keep accounts, so that you can help your aunt with the books of the farm."

"True, Monsieur Rodolphe; I never think of anything. I must learn to read and write to help my aunt," said the poor girl, seriously, so much absorbed by the charming picture of this peaceable life, that she believed in its realities. "After your lessons, you will work at the linen of the house, or you will make yourself a pretty peasant bonnet. At two o'clock you will go to your writing, and then you will take a long walk with your aunt, see the haymakers in summer, and the labourers in the fall: you will return quite fatigued, bringing with you a handful of sweet herbs that you have culled in the meadows for Musette."

"For we will return by the meadow, won't we, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Without doubt: there is a wooden bridge over the river. At your return, bless me, it is six or seven o'clock, and a fine brisk fire is blazing in the large kitchen of the farm; you go there and warm yourself, and have a talk with the good folks just returned from the work of the farm; then you dine with your aunt. Sometimes the curate, or some old friend of the house, sits down to talk with you. After that, you read or work, while your aunt has her game of cards. At ten o'clock she kisses you, and you retire to your chamber. The next morning you begin again."

"I could live for a hundred years in that manner, and never be tired, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"But all that is nothing to the Sundays and holidays."

"And those days, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"You will make yourself look very fine; you will put on your pretty peasant's dress, and the little round cap that becomes you so well; then you will get in the basket-wagon with your aunt and James, the farmboy, to go to grand mass at the village; after that, during the summer, you will not fail to go with your aunt to all the fêtes of the surrounding parishes. You are so kind, so good, such a nice housekeeper, your aunt loves you so much, the curate will give such a good account of you, that all the young farmers of the environs will wish to dance with you, because that is the way all marriages begin. Thus, by-and-by you will perceive one—and—"

Rodolphe, astonished at the silence of the young girl, turned to look at her: the poor girl could hardly restrain her sobs; for a moment deceived by the words of Rodolphe, she had forgotten the present, and the contrast of this present with a dream, a picture so charming and delightful, recalled the horrors of her position.

"Fleur de Marie, what is the matter?"

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, without intending it, you have caused me much chagrin. For a moment I believed in this paradise." "But, poor child, this paradise exists—look, look—stop, coachman!" The carriage stopped. La Goualeuse mechanically raised her head. She found herself on the top of a hill: what was her astonishment, her amazement! The pretty village built on the hillside, the farm, the meadow, the cows, the little river, the chestnut-trees, the church in the distance—the picture was before her eyes; nothing was wanting, even to Musette, a beautiful white heifer, the future ar-

favorite of La Goualeuse. This charming landscape was lighted up by a fine November sun. The yellow and purple leaves still covered the noble chestnut-trees, standing out in bold relief from the blue and smiling sky.

"Well! Fleur de Marie, what say you? Am I a good painter?" said Rodolphe, gayly.

The Goualeuse looked at him with surprise and inquietude: it seemed to her almost supernatural.

"How is this, Monsieur Rodolphe? but, mon Dieu! is this a dream? it almost makes me afraid. How! what you have told me is—"

"Nothing is more simple, my child. The 'fermière' is my nurse; I was brought up here. I wrote her this morning that I should come to-day to see her; I only painted after nature."

"Ah! it is true, Monsieur Rodolphe!" said La Goualeuse, with a profound sigh.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FARM.

THE farm whither Rodolphe had conducted Fleur de Marie was situated without the village of Boqueval, a little solitary and unknown parish, distant about two leagues from Ecouen. The carriage, following the instructions of Rodolphe, was driven down a steep hill into a long avenue, bordered on either side with apple and cherry trees; the wheels rolled without noise on a carpet of short green turf, with which the by-roads are usually covered. Fleur de Marie, silent and sad, remained, notwithstanding her efforts, under the sad impressions, which Rodolphe reproached himself for having caused. At the end of a few moments the vehicle passed the large door of the court of the farm, and continuing along a thick hedge, stopped before a little rustic door of wood half concealed by a thick grape-vine, with its autumn purple leaves.

"Here we are arrived, Fleur de Marie," said Rodolphe. "Are you content?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; yet I feel as if I am ashamed to appear before the 'fermière': I shall not dare to look at her." "And why not, my child?"

"You are right, Monsieur Rodolphe; she does not know me," said she, choking down a sigh.

They had, no doubt, been watching for the arrival of Rodolphe; for, as the coachman opened the gate, a woman, of about fifty years of age, clothed as are generally the rich "fermières" of the environs of Paris, with a face at once of a sweet and sad expression, appeared on the porch, and came to meet Rodolphe eagerly, but with much respect.

The Goualeuse became purple with shame, and descended from the carriage after a moment's hesitation.

"Good-day, my good Madame Georges," said Rodolphe; "you see I am punctual;" then turning to the coachman, and putting some money in his hands, he said, "You can return to Paris."

The coachman, a little squat man, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and his face almost entirely concealed by the fur collar of his coat, pocketed the money, made no answer, but mounting his seat, whipped up his horses, and soon disappeared down the green lane.

"After so long a drive, this dumb coachman appears in a great hurry to return," at first thought Rodolphe. "Bah! it is only two o'clock; no doubt he wants to get back as soon as he can, to make the most of the rest of the day;" so he attached no importance to his first observation. Fleur de Marie approached with a troubled and alarmed air, and whispered to him, so as not to be heard by Madame Georges, "Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe, pardon me. You have sent away the carriage—but the Ogresse! alas! I must return to her to-night; otherwise she will think me a thief; my clothes belong to her, and I owe—" "Be comforted, my child; it is for me to ask your pardon." "My pardon, and for what?" "For not having told you sooner that you can take off these miserable clothes for others that Madame Georges will furnish you. She has some that will about suit you, and she will no doubt lend them to you: thus, you see, she already commences her part of aunt."

Fleur de Marie thought she was in a dream; she looked alternately at Rodolphe and Madame Georges, and could not believe what she had heard.

"How," said she, her voice trembling with emotion, "I shall return no more to Paris! I shall remain here! Madame will allow it! Can it be possible! this castle in the air already!"

"It was this farm—you see it realized."

"No, no, it is too much—too much happiness."

"One can never have too much happiness, Fleur de Marie."

"Ah! for pity's sake, Monsieur Rodolphe, do not deceive me—it would kill me."

"My dear child, believe me," said Rodolphe, in a voice always affectionate, but with an accent of dignity, which Fleur de Marie had never yet heard. "Yes, you can from this day, if you wish, pass with Madame Georges, that peaceful life, of which the picture just now so much enchanted you. Although Madame Georges is not your aunt, yet she will have for you, when you know her, the most tender interest; you will pass for her niece with the people of the farm; this little deception will render your situation more agreeable. So I repeat once more, if it pleases you, Fleur de Marie, you can realize your dream of this morning. As soon as you are dressed as a little country girl," he added, smiling, "we will take you to see your future favourite, Musette, the pretty white heifer who is waiting for the fine collar you have promised her; then we will go and take a glance at your friends, the pigeons, and then to the dairy. We will afterward take a walk over the farm; I hold to fulfil my promise."

Fleur de Marie clasped her hands with force; surprise, joy, gratitude, and respect were expressed on her beautiful face; with her eyes bathed in tears, she cried,

"Monsieur Rodolphe, are you, then, an angel from heaven, that you do so much good to the unfortunate without knowing them, and deliver them from shame and misery?" "My poor child," answered Rodolphe, with a smile of profound melancholy and ineffable goodness, "although young, I have in my life already suffered much; that will explain to you my compassion

for those who suffer. Fleur de Marie, or, rather, Marie, go with Madame Georges. Yes, Marie, take henceforth this name, a name as sweet and pretty as you are! Before I leave, I must have some conversation with you, and I shall depart very happy, in knowing that you are happy."

Fleur de Marie answered not a word, but she approached Rodolphe, and bending her knees, took his hand, which she carried respectfully to her lips, with a movement filled with modesty and grace; then she followed Madame Georges, who appeared to regard her with great interest.

CHAPTER XIII.

MURPHY AND RODOLPHE.

RODOLPHE turned his steps towards the court of the farm, where he found the tall man, who, disguised as a coalman, had advised him of the arrival of Tom and Sarah.

Murphy—such is the name of this person—was about fifty years of age; some white locks silvered the two little tufts of flaxen hair which curled on each side of his head, the top of which was quite bald; his face, large and rubicund, was completely shaved, except the whiskers, of deep red, which were suffered to grow on his fat cheeks. Notwithstanding his age and corpulency, Murphy was active and robust. His expression, although phlegmatic, was at the same time benevolent and resolute. He wore a white cravat, a large waistcoat, and a black coat with long skirts; his smallclothes, of a greenish drab, were of the same material as his gaiters, with their pearl buttons; these were rather short, leaving his stockings visible, of unbleached wool.

The dress and manly bearing of Murphy were a perfect picture of what the English call a gentleman farmer. However, we hasten to say that Murphy was an English gentleman, and not a farmer.

At the moment that Rodolphe entered the court, Murphy put into the pocket of a small travelling-carriage a pair of pistols, which he had just carefully cleaned.

"Ah! what the devil are you doing with your pistols?" said Rodolphe to him. "That is my affair, my lord," said Murphy, getting down from the steps; "attend to your business—I'll attend to mine."

"At what hour did you order the horses?"

"According to your orders, just at nightfall."

"You arrived this morning?" "At eight o'clock. Madame Georges had ample time to get all things ready."

"You appear to be out of humour; have you any fault to find with me?" "I have but too much, my lord—too much—one day with another—finally—the danger—it is your life." "You do very well to talk! If I were to let you alone, you would run all the risks." "And when you can do good without risking your life, where is the great harm, my lord?" "Where would be the great pleasure, Murphy?" "You," said he, shrugging his shoulders, "you! in such taverns!" "Oh! there you are, you John Bulls, with your aristocratic scruples! believing your great lords superior beings to yourselves, poor lambs—proud of your butchers!"

"If you were English you would comprehend this, my lord—'on honore qui honore.' Besides, I should be a Turk, Chinese, or American, not

to find that you are wrong in thus exposing yourself. Last night, in that abominable street of 'la ciét,' in going to dig out that infernal Brasseur, whom the devil confound—it was only the fear of offending you that kept me from giving you my aid in your conflict with the ruffian you met in that horrid alley." "That is to say, Mr. Murphy, that you had some doubts of my strength and my courage!" "Unquestionably, you have given me reason a hundred times to doubt neither the one nor the other. Grace à Dieu, Crabb of Ramegate taught you to box, and Lacour of Paris the use of the cane and the foot, and for curiosity 'Argot,' the famous Bertrand has instructed you in fencing, and in your trials with these professors you have often had the advantage; you can kill a swallow on the wing with your pistol; you have muscles like steel; although slender and puny, you can beat me as easily as a race-horse can a dray-horse—that is true."

Rodolphe had complaisantly listened to this enumeration of his gladiatorial qualities; he answered, smiling, "Well, and what do you fear, then?"

"I maintain, my lord, that it is not suitable that you take by the collar the first blackguard you meet; I do not say this on account of the inconvenience it puts a certain honourable gentleman of my acquaintance to in blacking his face with charcoal, and looking like the devil. Notwithstanding my gray hairs, my 'embonpoint,' and my gravity, I'll disguise myself like a rope-dancer, if it will serve you; but yet I must say—"

"Oh! I know it well, old Murphy! when an idea is graven on your iron scull, when affection is planted in your brave and excellent heart, the devil must use his teeth and nails to draw them out."

"You flatter me, my lord; you meditate some—"

"Don't alarm yourself." "Some folly, my lord."

"My poor Murphy, you choose a poor time to lecture me!"

"Why?" "I am now in one of my moments of pride and happiness. I am here—" "In a place where you have done good?" "It is a place of refuge from your homilies—it is my Temple Bar."

"If it is, where the devil do you wish I should take you, my lord?" "Master Murphy, you flatter me; you wish to prevent some new folly."

"My lord, there are some for which I am very indulgent."

"Those of money?" "Yes; for, after all, with two millions of revenue—" "One is often in want, my poor Murphy." "To whom do you say thus, my lord?"

"Yes! there are so many pleasures, so pure, so profound, which cost so little! What is there comparable to that which I enjoyed just now, when this unfortunate creature found herself in security here, and in her gratitude she kissed my hand? This is not all; my happiness has a long future; to-morrow, after to-morrow, I can still think with delight of the joys of this poor child, in this tranquil retreat, awakening each morning near Madame Georges, who will love her tenderly; for misfortune has sympathy with misfortune."

"Oh! as for Madame Georges, never were benefits better bestowed. Noble, courageous woman! an angel of virtue—an angel. I am rarely moved, but I am touched with the suffer-

ings of Madame Georges. But as for your new protégée—hold, we won't talk about her, my lord. "Why not, Murphy?" "My lord, you do what seems to you to be good." "I do what is just," said Rodolphe, with a shade of impatience. "That which is just, according to your opinion."

"That which is just before God and my conscience," answered Rodolphe, severely. "Stop, my lord; we will talk no more about it—we shall not agree."

"No; I command you to speak," said Rodolphe, haughtily. "I have never so exposed myself that my lord has commanded me to be silent. I hope he will not command me to speak," answered Murphy, proudly.

"Monsieur Murphy!" cried Rodolphe, with a tone of increasing irritation. "My lord!" "You know, sir, I like no concealments." "It is convenient for me to have concealment!" said Murphy, roughly.

"Learn, sir, that if I descend to familiarity with you, it is on condition that you raise yourself to equal me in candour!" It is impossible to describe the sovereign "hauteur" with which Rodolphe pronounced these last words. "My lord! I am fifty years of age; I am a gentleman; you ought not to speak thus to me." "Be quiet!" "My lord!" "Be quiet!" "My lord, it is unworthy of you to force a man of sensibility to recall the services he has rendered."

"Your services? and have I not paid them in every way?"

We must say, in justice to Rodolphe, that he had not attached that importance to these cruel words, which placed Murphy in the light of a mercenary; unfortunately, he interpreted them in this manner. He became purple with shame, struck his contracted fists on his bald head with an expression of mournful indignation, then suddenly casting his regards on Rodolphe, whose whole frame shook with passion, Murphy suppressed a sigh, and said, with a voice of tender commiseration, "My lord, return to yourself; you are no longer reasonable!"

These words gave the finishing stroke to the rage of Rodolphe; his eyes sparkled with savage brightness; his lips became white, and advancing towards Murphy with a threatening gesture, he cried, "And do you dare!" Murphy retreated a step, and said, as if in spite of himself, "My lord, my lord! remember the 13th January!" These words produced a magical effect on Rodolphe: his face, contracted by passion, became relaxed; he looked fixedly at Murphy, cast down his head, and then, after a moment's silence, he said, or murmured, in a touching voice, "Ah! sir, you are cruel—I thought otherwise—and you again—you—" Rodolphe could not finish; his voice died away, and he fell, half sitting, on a seat of stone, and concealed his face in his hands.

"My lord," cried Murphy, "my good lord, pardon me; pardon your old faithful Murphy. It was only pushed to extremity; and fearing, alas! not for myself, but for you, the consequences of your passion, that I said it: I said it without anger, without reproach; I have said it in spite of myself, and with compassion. Mon Dieu! who ought to know your character if I don't, who have not left you since your infancy! In pity say that you forgive me for having recalled to your mind that fatal day—alas! what expiations have you not—"

Rodolphe raised his head; he was very pale; he said to his companion, with a soft and sad voice,

"Enough, enough, my old friend; I thank you for having stopped, with one word, this foolish quarrel. I will make no excuses for what I have said; you know, as we say at home, it is a long way from the heart to the lips. I was crazy—let us say no more about it."

"Alas! now I see you for a long time sad. How unfortunate I am! I desire nothing so much as to see you shake off this melancholy temperament, and by my foolish susceptibility I plunge you into it again! 'Mort Dieu!' what is the use of being an honest man, and of having gray hairs, if it is not to endure the reproaches that one does not merit! But no," continued Murphy, with an exultation quite comic from its contrast with his habitual calmness of mind; "but no, I must be flattered all the day long; they must say to me, 'Monsieur Murphy, you are the model of attendants; there is no fidelity like yours; Monsieur Murphy, you are an admirable man; Monsieur Murphy, the devil—' peste," how good he is—oh! oh! Monsieur Murphy, brave Murphy!! Get along, old parrot; come, now, scratch your old gray head!" Then, recollecting the affectionate words that Rodolphe had addressed to him at the commencement of their conversation, he cried out with renewed violence, "But didn't he call me his good, faithful, kind Murphy—and I, to go on like a clown at an involuntary whim! at my age—'Mort Dieu!' it is enough to make me tear out my hair;" and the poor man seized his head with both hands.

These words and this gesture were a sign that the paroxysm had arrived at its climax. Fortunately or unfortunately for Murphy, he was quite bald, which rendered his threat of no avail, no doubt to his great regret; for when the action succeeded the words, that is to say, when his fingers only come in contact with the surface of his skull, shining and polished like marble, the worthy man was confused, and ashamed with his presumption; he accused himself of being a boaster, a romancer; we must say, however, to exculpate poor Murphy from this charge, that he formerly possessed as fine a head of hair as had ever ornamented the "cranium" of any gentleman of Yorkshire.

Ordinarily, the disappointment of Murphy respecting his hair would have amused Rodolphe; but his thoughts were now too grave, too sad. However, wishing not to augment the regret of his companion, he said to him, with a gentle smile, "Listen, good Murphy. You appear to praise without reserve the good that I have done for Madame Georges." "My lord—" "And to be astonished at the interest I have expressed for this poor girl?" "My lord, pardon me; I have been wrong; I have been wrong." "No; I conceive, appearances have deceived you. Yet, as you assist me with as much fidelity as courage in the enterprise I have undertaken, it is my duty, or, if you prefer it, my grateful feelings, which makes me try to convince you that I have not acted lightly." "I know it, my lord."

"You know my ideas on the subject of what good a man can do. To assist honourable unfortunates who ask assistance, is well. To search after those who struggle with honour, with energy, and come to their aid, sometimes without their knowledge—to prevent in time want or temptation which might lead to crime—is better. To reinstate them in their own eyes, to render honest and good those who have preserved some good qualities amid all the misery

that surrounded them, all the want that threatened them, all the scorn and contempt that withered them, is better still. To pursue with a vigorous hatred, an implacable vengeance, vice, infamy, crime, whether it wallows in the mud or reposes on velvet, is justice; but to blindly succour merited misery, but to degrade charity and pity, but to prostitute these chaste and pious consolations of my wounded heart—to prostitute them to unworthy, infamous beings, would be horrible, impious, sacrilegious. It would be doubting a God; and he who gives ought to believe!" "My lord, I did not intend to say that the objects of your benefactions were unworthy."

"One word more, my old friend; Madame Georges, and the poor young girl I have confided to her, have set out from two extremes, to fall into one common abyss—misfortune. The one, happy, rich, loved, honoured, endowed with every virtue, has seen her life withered, broken, annihilated by the wicked hypocrite to whom blind parents had married her. I say it with joy, but for me, the poor woman would have expired with misery and want; for shame prevented her from applying to any one."

"Ah! my lord, when we arrived at that wretched hovel, what frightful poverty! horrible, horrible! And when, after her long illness, she awoke, as it were, in this house, so calm, so quiet, what surprise! what gratitude! You are right, my lord, to see such unfortunate ones succoured; it makes one believe in God."

"It is by assisting them we honour God; I acknowledge nothing more celestial than virtue, calm and holy; nothing is more respectable than a woman like Madame Georges, who, educated by a pious and good mother in an intelligent observance of every duty, has never failed in them—never! and has valiantly passed through the most frightful trials. But is it not also honouring God, in that which is most holy, by dragging from the mire one of those rare beings which he is pleased to endow? does she not also merit our pity, our interest, our respect? Yes, respect the poor child who, left to her own instinct; who, tortured, imprisoned, degraded, defiled, has in a holy manner preserved at the bottom of her heart the noble germs that God himself has planted! If you had heard her, this poor creature, at the first word of interest that I expressed for her, at the first honest and friendly word she had ever heard, how the most charming instinct, tastes the most pure, thought the most delicate, the most poetic, are awakened in her ingenuous mind, just like in Spring, when the thousand wild flowers of the meadows unfold their blossoms at the least ray of the sun, without knowing why! During this hour's conversation that I had with this workman, I discovered in Fleur de Marie treasures of goodness, grace, and wisdom—yes, wisdom, my old Murphy. A smile came to my lip and a tear started to my eyes when, with her little prattling, filled with reason, she proved to me that I must economize forty sous each day to keep from want and from temptation. Poor little thing, she said all this with such a serious tone, so touching—she felt such satisfaction at giving me good advice, such sweet delight at hearing me promise that I would follow it—I was affected—oh! affected to tears, as I have told you; and I am accused of being 'blase,' hard, inflexible. Oh! no, no, thank God! sometimes I yet can feel my heart beat warm, and— But you, my friend, you are softened.

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Come, come, Fleur de Marie shall not be jealous of Madame Georges; you will interest yourself also in her fate."

"It is true, my lord—this wishing you to economize forty sous, believing you to be a workman, instead of asking you to spend it for her."

"And, when I think that this child has a rich and honoured mother, as they say, who has shamefully abandoned her! oh! if this is so, I will know it, I hope—and I will tell you how. Oh! if it is so! wo, wo to that woman! she will have a terrible expiation to make. Murphy, Murphy, never have I felt such sensations of hatred as I feel when I think of this woman, whom I know not. You know, Murphy, you know, there are certain vengeance dear to me—certain sufferings most precious—I have a thirst for certain tears!" "Alas! my lord," said Murphy, much afflicted at the diabolical expression of Rodolphe's countenance as he spoke these words, "I know it; those who merit your compassion and interest often say of you, 'He is, then, an angel from heaven!' while those who deserve your contempt and hatred, cursing you in their despair, 'He is the devil!'"

"Hush! here is Madame Georges and Marie. Prepare everything for our departure; we must be at Paris early."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PARTING.

MARIE (henceforth we shall give this name to La Goualeuse), thanks to the cares of Madame Georges, was no longer recognisable. A pretty little round peasant's hat, with two thick braids of new blonde hair, half concealed her heavenly face; a kerchief of white muslin was crossed on her breast, and disappeared under the bodice of her apron of changeable silk, whose lively colours formed a pleasing contrast to the Carmelite dress of fine wool, which appeared as if it had been made for her.

The expression of Marie was profoundly contemplative; there are certain joys which cause emotions of ineffable sadness, of melancholy the most holy.

Rodolphe was not surprised at the gravity of Marie; he expected it. Joyous and lively, he would have had a less exalted opinion of her. With perfect tact, he made her no compliments on her beauty, but he felt that there was something solemn, something holy, in this redemption of a being snatched from vice. On the serious and resigned countenance of Madame Georges could be seen the traces of long suffering, of profound grief; she looked at Marie with compassion, a benevolence almost maternal, so much were the sweetness and grace of the young girl sympathetic. "Here is my child," said she, presenting Marie to Rodolphe, "who comes to thank you for your goodness." At these words, "my child," La Goualeuse slowly turned her large eyes towards her protectress, and looked at her for some moments with an expression of gratitude quite indescribable. "I thank you for Marie, my dear Madame Georges; she is worthy of this tender interest. She will merit it always."

"Monsieur Rodolphe," said Marie, in a voice trembling with emotion, "you understand, do you not, that I can find nothing to say to you?" "your emotion tells me all, Marie." "Oh! she

feels how much her happiness is providential," said Madame Georges, much affected. "Her first movement, on entering my chamber, was to bend her knees before my crucifix."

"It was because—now, thanks to you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I dare to pray," said Marie, looking at her friend.

Murphy turned suddenly away; his English stoicism would not allow them to see how much he was touched by the simple words of Marie.

Rodolphe said, "My child, I have something to say to Madame Georges. My friend Murphy will conduct you over the farm, and will make you acquainted with your future protégées. We will join you directly. Well! well, Murphy, don't you hear me?"

The good man turned his back, and pretended to blow his nose with a most formidable noise; he then put his handkerchief into his pocket, pulled his hat over his eyes, and half turning round, offered his arm to Marie.

He had so skillfully manœuvred, that neither Rodolphe nor Madame Georges had perceived his face. Taking the arm of the young girl, he moved rapidly towards the buildings of the farm, walking so fast that, to keep up with him, Marie was obliged to run, as she had run in her infancy after La Chouette.

"Well! Madame Georges, what do you think of Marie?" said Rodolphe. "Monsieur Rodolphe, I have already told you, that hardly had she entered into my chamber, when, seeing my 'Christ,' she threw herself on her knees with a movement so spontaneous, so naturally religious, I cannot describe it; I saw in a moment that her mind was not degraded; and, besides, Monsieur Rodolphe, in her expressions of gratitude to you, there is nothing exaggerated—all is sincere. One word more will prove to you how much this religious instinct is all-dominant. I said to her, 'You must have been very much astonished, very happy, when Monsieur Rodolphe told you that you should remain here? what a profound impression it must have made!' 'Oh! yes,' she answered; 'when Monsieur Rodolphe told me that, I do not know what passed through my mind at once; but I experienced that kind of religious content, that holy respect that I feel when I enter a church—when I could enter,' she added; 'for you know, Madame—' I did not let her finish, seeing her face covered with shame. 'I know, my child—and I will always call you my child, if you will permit me—I know you have suffered much; but God blesses those who love and those who fear him—those who have been unfortunate and those who repent.'"

"Well, Madame Georges, now I am doubly content with what I have done. This poor girl interests you. You will only have to sow and reap; you have divined well; her instincts are excellent."

"That which has touched me the most is, that she never allowed herself to ask me one question concerning you, for naturally her curiosity must be much excited. Struck with this delicacy, and wishing to try her, I said, 'You must be quite anxious to know who your benefactor is?' 'I know it, she answered, with a charming naïveté; 'he is called My Benefactor.'"

"Thus, then, you will love her? Excellent woman, her company will be a solace for you; she will occupy at least a small corner of your heart."

"Yes, I will interest myself for her, as I would have interested myself for him," said Madame

Georges, in a heart-rending tone. Rodolphe took her hand: "Come, come, do not be discouraged yet; if your researches have been in vain, perhaps some day—" "Madame Georges bowed her head sadly, and said, with bitterness, "My poor son would have been now twenty years old." "Say that he is twenty years old." "May God hear you and grant it!" murmured Rodolphe. "He will grant it, I really hope, for the best. Yesterday I went (but in vain) to look for a certain man called Bras-Rouge, who, I had been told, could possibly give me some account of your son. Coming from his nurse after a fight, I met this poor unfortunate child." "Alas! so much the better! your kindness for me put you in the way to succour another unfortunate."

"Besides, I have wished for a long time to explore these miserable regions, almost sure that there are some souls to be saved from old Satan, whom I amuse myself by thwarting often," added Rodolphe, smiling, "and from whom I sometimes snatch his best morsels. Then," he added, in a serious tone, "have you no news from Rochefort?" "None," said Madame Georges, in a low voice, and shuddering.

"So much the better! this monster has met death in the mud-banks, in endeavouring to escape. His description is published, and he is too formidable a villain that they should not have used every exertion to recover him; and as it is six months since he has disappeared from the gal—" Rodolphe stopped just as he was about to pronounce the word.

"From the galleys! oh! say it—from the galleys," cried the unhappy woman, in a voice almost wild. "The father of my son! Ah! if this unfortunate child lives yet—if, like me, he has not changed his name, what shame—what shame—and this is nothing yet. His father has perhaps kept his humble promise. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, pardon me; but, notwithstanding your benefactions, I am yet very unhappy!"

"Poor woman, calm yourself."

"Sometimes I have horrible alarms; I imagine that my husband has escaped safe and sound from Rochefort; that he seeks me to kill me, as perhaps he has killed my child; for what has he done with him—what has he done with him?" "This is, indeed, an unfathomable mystery," said Rodolphe, gravely. "What interest could this wretch have in taking away your son? Some fifteen years ago he endeavoured to escape to some foreign country; so young a child would only embarrass his flight." "Alas! Monsieur Rodolphe, when my husband" (the poor woman shuddered in pronouncing these words) "was arrested on the frontiers and brought back to Paris, they permitted me to visit him in prison, he said to me these horrible words: 'I have carried off your child because you love him, and because, through him, I can force you to send me money, of which he shall profit or not, as it suits me; that is my business. Whether alive or dead, don't concern yourself; but if he lives, he shall be in good hands: you shall drink of the cup of shame for the son, as you have for the father.' Alas! a short time after my husband was condemned for life. Since that time, all the entreaties, the prayers, with which my letters were filled, have been in vain; I have learned nothing of the fate of my son. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, my son! where is he at present? Those frightful words are constantly recurring to me: 'You shall drink of the cup of shame for the son, as you have for the father.'"

"But this would be atrocious, inexplicable; why try to corrupt the poor child? above all, why take him from you?" "I have told you, Monsieur Rodolphe, to force me to send him money; although he had ruined me, I still had some resources left, but these were soon exhausted. Notwithstanding his baseness, I could not but think that he would employ at least a part of this money for this poor child." "And has your son no mark—nothing by which he may be recognised?"

"None other than that which I have spoken of, Monsieur Rodolphe; a small 'Saint Esprit' sculptured in lapislazuli, fastened to his neck by a silver chain; this relic, blessed by the holy father, was a gift from my mother, who had worn it from her childhood, and regarded it with great veneration. I had also worn it, and fastened it myself around the neck of my child. Alas! this talisman has lost its virtue."

"Who knows, good mother? God is all-powerful."

"It was Providence who sent you to me!"

"Too late, my good Madame Georges, too late. I might have saved you from years of sorrow."

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, have you not loaded me with—"

"What? I have bought this farm; you have consented to serve me as agent, and, thanks to your excellent management, it produces me—"

"Produces you, my lord?" said Madame Georges, interrupting Rodolphe; "do I not pay over the proceeds to our good Abbé Laporte? And this sum, is it not, according to your orders, distributed as alms?"

"And is it not an excellent produce? But you have advised the excellent abbé of my arrival, have you not? I want to recommend my protégée to him. Has he received my letter?" "Monsieur Murphy carried it to him when he arrived this morning."

"In this letter I related to our good curé the history of this poor child. I was not certain that I could come myself to-day; in this case, Murphy would have brought Marie to you." One of the boys of the farm interrupted this conversation, which took place in the garden. "Madame," he said, "'Monsieur le Curé' awaits you." "Have the posthorses arrived, my boy?" asked Rodolphe. "Ye, Monsieur Rodolphe; they are putting them to the carriage." Madame Georges, the curate, and the people at the farm, only knew the protector of Fleur de Marie by the name of Rodolphe. The discretion of Murphy was impenetrable; as much as he made it a point, when they were alone, to "my son" Rodolphe, so much had he care when before strangers never to call him by any other name than that of Monsieur Rodolphe.

"I forgot to inform you, my dear Madame Georges," said Rodolphe, as they walked towards the house, "that Marie has, I think, a weak chest; misery and privations have injured her health. This morning, in the strong light, I was struck with her extreme paleness; although her cheeks were rosy, her eyes appeared to shine with a feverish expression. She will need great care." "Count upon me, Monsieur Rodolphe. But, praised be God! there is nothing serious; at this age, country air, with quiet repose—she will soon improve."

"I think so myself. But never mind. I don't put great confidence in your country doctors. I will tell Murphy to bring here a skillful physi-

cian, who will prescribe the proper regimen. You will send me word from time to time how she gets on. When she becomes more quiet and composed, we will think of the future. Perhaps it will be better for her to remain always with you, if her conduct and character are agreeable to you." "It will be my wish, Monsieur Rodolphe. She will take the place of the child that I regret each day."

"Well, let us hope for you, let us hope for her."

At the moment when they approached the house from the farm, Murphy and Marie came up from the other side. Marie was all delighted with her walk. Rodolphe called the attention of Madame Georges to the round red spots on the cheeks of the young girl, which formed such a striking contrast to the delicate whiteness of her skin. The worthy man, leaving the arm of Marie, came and whispered to Rodolphe, "This little girl has enchanted me; I do not know, now, which interests me the most, she or Madame Georges. I was a fool and a madman."

"Don't tear out your hair for that, old Murphy," said Rodolphe, smiling, and squeezing his arm.

Madame Georges, leaning on the arm of Marie, entered with her into the little saloon, on the ground floor, where the Abbé Laporte awaited them.

Murphy went to make arrangements for their departure, and Madame Georges, Marie, Rodolphe, and the curé remained alone. Plain, but very comfortable, this little room was hung and furnished with chintz, like the rest of the house, exactly as Rodolphe had described it. A thick carpet covered the floor, a good fire blazed in the chimney, and two bouquets of "*reines-marguerites*," placed in glass vases, spread their perfume throughout the apartment. Through the green blinds, half closed, could be seen the meadow, the little river, and, on the other side, the hill planted with chestnut-trees.

The Abbé Laporte, seated alongside of the fire, was more than eighty years old; since the last days of the Revolution he had officiated in this parish.

It is impossible to imagine anything more venerable than his appearance, more sweetly imposing than his withered countenance, pale, thin, and shaded by his long white hair, which fell from the collar of his cassock, which was patched in many places, the abbé preferring, as he said, to clothe two or three poor children with good warm clothing than to play the gallant, that is to say, than to wear one cassock less than two or three years.

The good abbé was so old that his hands trembled always; and there was something so touching in this movement, that when he raised them sometimes in speaking, one would have said he was giving his blessing. Rodolphe looked at Marie with interest; if he had known her less, or, rather, not imagined her thoughts, he would have been astonished to see her approach the abbé with a serenity quite religious.

The admirable instinct of Marie had taught her that shame ceased where expiation and repentance commenced.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Rodolphe, respectfully, "Madame Georges has consented to take charge of this young girl, for whom I demand your kindness and cares."

"She has the right, monsieur, as all those have who come to us. The mercy of God is in-

exhaustible, my dear child; he has proved it, in not forsaking you in such sad trials. I know all," and he took the hand of Marie within his own trembling and venerable hands. "The generous man who has saved you, has realized these words of the Holy Scriptures: 'The Lord is near those who cry unto him; he will fulfil the desires of those who fear him: he will listen to their petitions, he will save them.' Now, merit his goodness, by your conduct; you will always find me to encourage you, to sustain you, in the good way you have entered. You will have in Madame Georges an example every day—in me a faithful counsellor. The Lord will finish his work."

"And I will pray for those who had pity on me, who brought me here, father," said Marie, and by a movement quite involuntary, she threw herself at his feet; her emotion was deep, her sobs almost choked her. Madame Georges, Rodolphe, the abbé, all were profoundly affected.

"Raise yourself, my child," said the curé; "you will soon merit absolution from the great fault of which you have rather been the victim than culpable; to speak again with the prophet, 'The Lord sustains all those who are ready to fall, and raises all those who are cast down.'"

"Farewell, Marie," said Rodolphe, giving to her a small gold cross, fastened to a black velvet riband; "farewell, keep this cross as a remembrance of me; I have had engraved on it this morning the date of your deliverance—of your redemption. I will soon return to see you." Marie pressed the cross to her lips. At this moment Murphy opened the door of the saloon: "Monsieur Rodolphe, the horses are ready."

"Adieu, father; adieu, my good Madame Georges. I recommend your child. Once more, farewell, Marie." The venerable priest, leaning on the arm of Marie and Madame Georges, who sustained his tottering steps, went to the porch to see Rodolphe depart. The last rays of the setting sun shone out upon this interesting and melancholy group.

An old priest, a symbol of charity, pardon, and hope eternal;

A woman, tried by all griefs which could afflict a wife, a mother;

A young girl, just emerging from infancy, already plunged into the abyss of vice, by misery, and by the besetting infamy of crime.

Rodolphe mounted into the carriage, Murphy seated himself at his side, and the horses started off at a gallop.

CHAPTER XV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THE next morning, Rodolphe, still disguised as a workman, was to be seen at the door of a tavern called the "Panier-Fleuri," situated not far from the "barrière" of Bercy. At ten o'clock of the evening previous, the Chourineur had been exact at the appointed time and place, as indicated by Rodolphe; the continuation of this story will give the result of this interview.

It was then noon, and raining in torrents; the Seine, swollen by the almost continual rains, had obtained a great height, and overflowed a part of the quay. Rodolphe, looking from time to time with great impatience on the side of the "barrière," at last descried at a distance a man and woman advancing, sheltered by an umbrel-

la; it was La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole. These two persons were completely metamorphosed; the brigand had abandoned his wretched clothes and his air of brutal ferocity: he wore a long surtout of green beaver cloth, and a round hat; his cravat and his shirt were of extreme whiteness. If it had not been for his ugliness, and the savage sparkling of his eye, always sharp and piercing, one would have taken this man, with his peacable and confident gait, for an honest citizen. The Borgnesse, also in her Sunday garb, wore a white hat, a large shawl of "bourre-de-soie," imitation cashmere, and carried in her hand a large "cabas" (a box for figs).

The rain having ceased for a moment, Rodolphe, surmounting the disgust that he felt at the sight of these wretches, walked straight up to them.

For the "Argot" of the tapis-franc, the Maître d'Ecole had substituted a language quite "recherché," which appeared the more horrible, as it announced a cultivated mind, and contrasted with the sanguinary boastings of this brigand.

As Rodolphe approached him, the Maître d'Ecole saluted him profoundly, and La Chouette made a low courtesy. "Monsieur, your very humble servant," said he: "delighted to make, or, rather, to make again your acquaintance, for the day before yesterday you deigned to bestow on me two blows with your fists, enough to stun a rhinoceros. But we will say no more about that now; it was a pleasantry on your part—I am sure a simple pleasantry—think no more about it; grave affairs bring us together again. I saw the Chourineur last night at eleven o'clock at the tapis-franc; I told him to meet us here this morning, if he wished to be our assistant; but it appears that he refuses decidedly." "You accept, then?" "If you please, monsieur, your name?" "Rodolphe."

"Monsieur Rodolphe, we will enter into the Panier-Fleuri. Neither madame nor myself has breakfasted. We will speak of our little affairs while we are breaking a crust."

"Willingly."

"However, we can talk as we are walking; you and the Chourineur, owe, without meaning to reproach you, some damages to my wife and me. You have made us lose more than two thousand francs. La Chouette had an appointment, near Saint Ouen, with a tall gentleman in mourning, who came to ask for you, the other night, at the tapis-franc; he proposed that amount if we would do something to you. But, Finette, go and choose a cabinet at the Panier-Fleuri, and order the breakfast; some cutlets, a morsel of veal, a salad, and two bottles of Beaune-première; we will join you."

La Chouette had not for a moment taken her eye from Rodolphe; she went in, after exchanging a rapid glance with her companion, who continued,

"I tell you, then, Monsieur Rodolphe, that the Chourineur has 'edified' me about this proposition for the two thousand francs."

"What does that mean, 'edify'?"

"It is true this language is a little too high-flown for you; I mean to say that the Chourineur has told me what the tall man in black wanted of you, with his two thousand francs." "Well, well." "It is not so well, young man; for, the Chourineur having met La Chouette, yesterday morning, near Saint Ouen, never left her a moment, as soon as he saw the tall man in

black arrive; so that he did not dare to come near her. It is, then, two thousand francs that you must put us in the way of getting, without counting the five hundred that we were to have received for a portfolio, that we were to return, but which otherwise we should not have returned, after inspection of the papers, which appear to us to be of more value than that."

"It contains, then, papers of much value?"

"It contains papers which appear to me very curious, although the greater part are written in English, and which I keep here," said the brigand, striking the pocket of his surtout. On learning that the *Maitre d'Ecole* had about his person the papers he had stolen from Tom, Rodolphe was much satisfied, as they were of the first importance for him. His instructions to the *Chourineur* had been on this account, to prevent Tom from approaching *La Chouette*; for she would keep the portfolio, and Rodolphe hoped that he would become the possessor.

"I take care of these papers as I would of my purse," said the brigand; "for I have found out the address of this stranger, and, by some means or other, I will see him."

"We can make a trade, if you will; for, if our plot succeeds, I will buy those papers from you; I, who know the man—that will be better than your—"

"We will see—but let us return to business."

"Well, then, I have proposed a superb affair to the *Chourineur*; at first he accepted it, and then backed out."

"He always had singular ideas." "But, in declining, he observed to me—" "He observed to you!! the devil, you are fierce upon grammar." "*Maitre d'Ecole*, it is my trade. He observed to me, that if he didn't eat 'pain rouge,' that was no reason why others should not, and that you, doubtless, would lend me your aid."

"And may I know, without indiscretion, why you made an appointment with the *Chourineur* yesterday, at Saint Ouen? that which procured him the advantage of meeting *La Chouette*? he was rather embarrassed how to answer that question." Rodolphe imperceptibly bit his lips; he however, answered, shrugging his shoulders, "I believe so, for I had only told him half of my project—you understand—not knowing whether he was quite decided." "It was more prudent." "So much the more prudent, as I had two strings to my bow." "Ah, bah!!! Certainly." "You are a man of precaution. You had, then, given a rendezvous to the *Chourineur* at Saint Ouen for—"

Rodolphe, after a moment's hesitation, had the happiness to imagine a story which would cover the "maladresse" of the *Chourineur*.

"Here is the story. The affair that I propose is very good, because the master of the house in question is in the country. All my fear was that he might return; to be perfectly sure, I said to myself, there is only one thing to do."

"That was to assure yourself that he was in the country."

"As you say. I set out, then, for *Pierrefitte*, where his country-house is. My cousin is a servant there—do you understand?" "Perfectly, my boy. Well?"

"My cousin told me that her master would not return to Paris until the day after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow?" "Yes." "Very well. But I return to my question. Why did you agree to meet the *Chourineur* at Saint Ouen?" "You

are not very cunning. What is the distance from *Pierrefitte* to Saint Ouen?"

"About a league." "And from Saint Ouen to Paris?" "The same." "Well! if I had found no one at *Pierrefitte*, that is to say, the house vacant, there would have been some good to be done there—not so good as at Paris, but passable—I would return to Saint Ouen to seek the *Chourineur*, who was waiting for me: from thence we could return to *Pierrefitte* by a cross-road that I know, and—" "I comprehend. If, on the contrary, the affair was to come off at Paris?" "We would reach the 'barrière de l'Etoile' by the road of the Révolte, and from thence to the Allée des Veuves." "There is only one step—it is quite plain. At Saint Ouen, you had two strings to your bow—that was very adroit. Now I understand why the *Chourineur* was at Saint Ouen. So now we can say that the house in the Allée des Veuves will be uninhabited until after to-morrow."

"Uninhabited, except by the porter."

"Understood. And it is an advantageous operation?"

"My cousin has spoken to me of sixty thousand francs in gold—in the cabinet of her master." "And you know the rooms?" "Like my pocket. My cousin has lived there for a year; and it is from hearing her speak of the immense sums her master drew from time to time from the bank, to place them otherwise, that this idea came first into my head. As the porter is strong, I spoke about it to the *Chourineur*; after much persuasion, he at first consented, but afterward drew back. However, he is not capable of selling a friend."

"No! he has some—But here we are. I do not know if you are like me, but the morning air has given me an appetite." *La Chouette* was on the sill of the door. "This way—this way," she cried; "I have ordered the breakfast." Rodolphe wished that the brigand should pass in first—he had his reasons—but the *Maitre d'Ecole* was so polite, so urgent, that he was obliged to precede him.

Before sitting down to table, the *Maitre d'Ecole* struck lightly on the floor and walls, so as to assure himself of their thickness. "We will have no need to speak very low," he said; "the wainscot is not thin; let them serve all at once, and we need not be interrupted in our conversation." The breakfast was then brought in by a servant of the inn; but before the door was closed, Rodolphe saw the coalman, Murphy, seated in an adjoining cabinet. The chamber wherein passed the scene we are about to describe was long and narrow, and lighted by a window that looked into the street directly opposite the door. *La Chouette* sat with her back to this window; the *Maitre d'Ecole* was on one side of the table, and Rodolphe was on the other: as soon as the servant went out, the brigand arose, took his plate, and seated himself at the side of Rodolphe, so as to completely conceal him from the door. "We can talk better," he said, "and we need not talk so loud." "And, besides, you wish to place yourself between the door and me, to prevent my going out," answered Rodolphe, boldly.

The "*Maitre d'Ecole*" made a sign in the affirmative; and then half drawing out of the pocket of his coat a long round stiletto, with a wooden handle, "Do you see that?" "Yes." "Notice to amateurs," said he, knitting his brows, with a significant gesture. "And look out for me. I have put a dagger in my man," added *La Chouette*.

Rodolphe, with great composure, put his hand under his blouse, and drew out a small double-barrelled pistol, which he showed to the Maitre d'Ecole, and then replaced it in his pocket.

"We are made to understand one another," said the brigand, "but you don't exactly comprehend. I just suppose what is hardly probable. If any one should come to arrest me, whether you have set the trap for me or not—all the same—I'll stick you! So saying, he cast a ferocious glance at Rodolphe.

"And I'll jump on him to assist you, Fourline," cried La Chouette. Rodolphe answered not a word, but he shrugged his shoulders and poured out a glass of wine, which he drank. This "sang froid" imposed upon the Maitre d'Ecole, and he said, "I only warn you."

"Well, well, put your skewer into your pocket, there are no chickens here to be skewered. I am an old cock, and have good spurs, my man," said Rodolphe. "Now let us talk about business." "Let us talk about business, but don't say anything against my skewer; that makes no noise; it does not trouble any one." "Yes, and does its work very nice, don't it, Fourline?" added La Chouette.

"Apropos," said Rodolphe to La Chouette, "is it true that you know who are the parents of La Goualeuse?"

"My man has put into the portfolio of the tall man two letters which speak about this. But she shall never see them, the little gironde. I would rather tear out both her eyes with my own hands. Oh! when I catch her at the tapis-franc, her account shall be paid."

"Come, come! Finette, talking, talking, all talk; yet business does not get on." "Can we talk before her?" asked Rodolphe. "With all confidence; she has been tried, and can be of great use to us in watching, getting information, receiving, selling, &c., &c.; she has every quality for an excellent manager. Dear Finette!" added the brigand, extending his hand to her, "you have no idea how many services she has rendered me. But take off your shawl, my dear, you may take cold when you go out; put your shawl along with your cabas." La Chouette took off her shawl. Notwithstanding his presence of mind and the command which he had over himself, Rodolphe was not able to control a movement of surprise in seeing, suspended by a silver ring to a heavy chain of mock gold which the old woman had around her neck, a little "Saint Esprit" of lapis-lazuli, conforming in every respect to the description of the one worn by the son of Madame Georges, at the time of his abduction.

At this discovery, a sudden thought struck Rodolphe. According to the account of the Choureneur, the Maitre d'Ecole, in escaping from the galleys, six months back, had, by disfiguring and mutilating himself, evaded all the pursuits and researches of the police. It was also just six months since the husband of Madame Georges had made his escape, and no one knew what had become of him. From all this, he came to the conclusion that it was very possible that the Maitre d'Ecole and the husband of this unfortunate were one and the same person: this latter had belonged to the better class of society; the Maitre d'Ecole expressed himself often in select language. One remembrance awakened another. Rodolphe also recalled to mind that Madame Georges, one day, in speaking of the arrest of her husband, had mentioned the Herculean

resistance of the monster, so that he had nearly made his escape. If the brigand was the husband of Madame Georges, he must know the fate of his son, besides: he had preserved in the portfolio of the stranger some papers relative to the birth of La Goualeuse, so that Rodolphe had new and grave reasons for persisting in his projects.

Happily, his preoccupation escaped the brigand, who was very busy in helping La Chouette.

Rodolphe said to the Borgnesse, "Marble! you have a fine chain there." "Fine, but not dear," said the old woman, laughing; "it is false gold, which I keep until my dear man gives me a real one." "That will depend on the gentleman, Finette; if we make a good business—be easy." "It is astonishing how well it is imitated," said Rodolphe. "And at the end—what is it, then, the little blue thing?" "It is a present from my man, until he can give me a 'toquante,' an't it, 'Fourline?'"

Rodolphe saw his suspicions half confirmed, and awaited with anxiety the answer of the brigand, who replied,

"You must take care of that, Finette, 'toquante' or no 'toquante'—it is a talisman."

"A talisman?" said Rodolphe, carelessly. "You believe in talismans, do you? Where the devil did you get it? give me the address of the maker." "They don't make any more, my good sir; the shop is shut. Such as you see it, that jewel is of great antiquity—three generations. I think a great deal of it—it is a family tradition," he added, with a hideous smile; "it is on that account that I have given it to Finette, to give her luck in all those enterprises in which she so worthily assists me. You shall see her work—you shall see her—if we make together some commercial operations. But to return to our business. You say, then, that in the Allée des Veuves—" "There is at number 17 a house occupied by a rich man; he is called Monsieur—"

"I will not be so indiscreet as to ask you his name; there is, you say, sixty thousand francs in gold?" cried La Chouette. Rodolphe made a sign in the affirmative. "And you know all the rooms in the house?" said the Maitre d'Ecole. "Very well." "And the entrance, is it difficult?" "A wall of seven feet in height on the side of the Allée des Veuves, a garden and windows down to the ground." "And is there only one porter to guard all the treasure?" "Yes!" "And what may be your plan of campaign, young man?" demanded the Maitre d'Ecole, carelessly. "It is very simple: climb over the wall, pick the lock of the door, or force the window-shutters from without." "But if the porter should awake?" said the Maitre d'Ecole, looking steadily at Rodolphe. "That would be his own fault," said he, with a significant gesture. "Well! does it suit you?" "You know I cannot answer you, without first examining the premises myself, that is to say, by the aid of my wife; but if all you have told me is true, it seems to me that we will take it right warm—to-night," said the villain, looking fixedly at Rodolphe. "To-night? Impossible," he answered, coldly. "Why not? since the owner will not return until after to-morrow?" "Yes, but I cannot to-night." "Truly? Well, and I cannot to-morrow." "For what reason?" "The same that prevents you from acting to-night," said the brigand, chuckling. After a moment's reflection, Rodolphe replied, "Very

well—good—let it be to-night. Where shall we meet?" "Meet! why, we won't part," said the Maître d'Ecole. "How?" "Why should we part? if the rain holds up a little, we will go and take a look at the Allée des Veuves; you will see how my wife can work. That done, we will return and play a game of piquet, and eat a mouthful in a cellar that I know of in the Champs Elysées, near the river; and as the Allée des Veuves is deserted very early, we will go there about ten o'clock." "I will rejoin you at nine o'clock, then." "Do you want to do this job or not?" "Certainly." "Well, then, you must not leave us before this night; otherwise—" "Otherwise?" "I shall think you want to lay a snare for me, and it is on that account you wish to leave me." "If I wished to lay a trap for you, what will hinder me laying it to-night?" "Everything. You did not think that I would propose to act so soon. By not quitting us, you cannot inform any one." "Then you mistrust me?" "Infinitely; but as there may be some truth in what you have told me, and the half of sixty thousand francs is worth the trouble, I mean to try it; but to-night or never." "If you say never, I shall know how to hold myself respecting you, and I will serve you, in my turn, a dish of my cooking." "I will return your politeness, you may reckon on it." "All this is folly!" said La Chouette. "I think like my 'Fourline,' either to-night, or not at all." Rodolphe found himself in an anxious position; if he let this occasion escape of taking the Maître d'Ecole, he perhaps would never find him again; henceforth on his guard, or perhaps recognised, arrested, and taken back to the galleys, he would carry with him those secrets which he had so much interest to discover. Trusting to chance, to his courage and address, he said to the Maître d'Ecole, "I consent; we will not quit one another until to-night." "Then I am your man—and you shall not repent. But it is now two o'clock; from hence to the Allée des Veuves it is quite far; it rains in torrents; pay the scot, and let us take a hack." "If we take a hack, I can first smoke a cigar." "Without doubt," said the Maître d'Ecole; "Finette does not mind the smell of tobacco." "Well, I'll go and get the cigars," said Rodolphe, rising. "Do not give yourself the trouble," said the Maître d'Ecole, stopping him; "Finette will go." Rodolphe reseated himself. The Maître d'Ecole had imagined his design, and La Chouette went out. "What a good manager I have been," said he, complacently; "he!u! she would go through fire to serve me." "Speaking of fire, it is not very warm here," said Rodolphe, putting his hands under his blouse. Then, continuing the conversation with the brigand, he took a pencil from the pocket of his waistcoat, and without being perceived he wrote some words in haste, taking care to place the letters wide apart, for he wrote without seeing. Having finished, the difficulty was to send it to its address. He arose, and walked to the window, and began to sing, keeping time with his fingers on the window. The Maître d'Ecole came and looked through the window, and said to him, carelessly, "What are you playing there?" "I play, 'Tu n'aura pas ma rose!'"

"It is very pretty. I only wished to see if it had effect enough on any of the passers-by to induce them to stop and listen."

"I have no such pretensions." "You are wrong, young man, for you beat the glass as you would a drum."

CHAPTER XVI.

PREPARATIONS.

At this moment Chouette came in with the tobacco.

"It seems to me that it has stopped raining," said Rodolphe, lighting his cigar; "if we go and see the carriage ourselves, it will stretch our legs." "What do you say? it does not rain any more? Are you blind?" said the Maître d'Ecole. "Do you think I am going to expose Finette to the risk of taking cold? Risk her precious life, and spoil her fine new shawl?"

"You are right, my man; it is real dog's weather!"

"Well! the servant is coming. When we pay her, we will send her for a hack," answered Rodolphe. "Ah! now you talk like a sensible man." The servant entered, and Rodolphe gave her five francs. "Ah! monsieur, I cannot permit it; you are too kind," cried the Maître d'Ecole. "Come, come, every one in his turn." "I submit, but on condition that I offer you something, directly, at a little tavern in the Champs Elysées, which I know: a charming place." "Well, well, I accept." The servant being paid, they descended, and Rodolphe wished to pass behind, out of politeness for La Chouette; but the Maître d'Ecole would not suffer it; he followed him closely, watching every movement. The people of the eating-house kept also a bar; among the many customers, a coachman, with his large hat drawn over his eyes, was paying his account when our party descended. Notwithstanding the close observance of the brigand and La Chouette, Rodolphe, who went ahead, exchanged a rapid and imperceptible glance with Murphy.

The door of the hack was open; Rodolphe stopped, decided this time to get in last, as the coachman was slowly drawing near. In effect, La Chouette passed in first, but after many compliments, Rodolphe was obliged to follow, for the Maître d'Ecole whispered in his ear, "You are determined, then, that I shall mistrust you?" Rodolphe mounted, the coachman advanced to the door whistling, and looked at Rodolphe with a surprised and troubled air. "Where do you want to go, Bourgeois?" asked the coachman. Rodolphe answered, in a loud voice, "Allée des—" "Des Acacias," cried the Maître d'Ecole, interrupting him with a loud voice; "we will pay you well, coachman."

"How the devil could you say where we are going before all those folks?" continued the Maître d'Ecole. "Let all be discovered to-morrow! such words might betray us. Ah! young man, young man, you are very imprudent!" Rodolphe answered, "True, I never thought of that; but with my cigar I am going to smoke you like herrings; suppose we open one of the windows?" and joining the action to the word he let drop without a small paper nicely folded the same which he had written on under his blouse. The Maître d'Ecole watched him so closely that, notwithstanding the immovable composure of Rodolphe, he could not but perceive a glance of triumph, for, putting his head out of the door, he cried to the coachman, "Whip behind! whip behind! there is some one on the foot-board." Rodolphe shuddered but he joined his cries to those of his companion; the coachman stood on his seat, and said "No, no, 'bourgeois,' there is no one there." "Parbleu! I want to be certain, just for curi-

osity sake," answered the Maitre d'Ecole, jumping into the street. He saw no one, perceived nothing, so he thought himself mistaken. "You will laugh," said he, getting in; "I do not know why, but I thought some one was following us." The carriage at this moment turned into a cross street, and disappeared. Murphy, who had not lost sight of it, and who had perceived the manoeuvre of Rodolphe, run and picked up the little note, which had lodged in a crack of the pavement. At the end of a quarter of an hour, the Maitre d'Ecole said to the coachman, "We have changed our mind: 'Place De la Magdeleine.'" Rodolphe looked at him in astonishment.

"Without doubt, young man, from this place one can go a thousand different ways. If we should get into trouble, the deposition of the coachman could do us no harm." At that moment the hack approached the barrière, a man of large stature, clothed in a long white surcoat, having a hat drawn over his eyes, and of a very dark complexion, bent over the shoulders of a large and magnificent horse, passed rapidly on a hard trot.

"Fine horse, fine gentleman," said Rodolphe, leaning out of the window and following Murphy with his eyes, "what a pace he goes! did you see him?"

"Ma foi! he went by so quickly," said the Maitre d'Ecole, "I did not remark him." Rodolphe completely concealed his joy. Murphy had deciphered the note without a doubt. The Maitre d'Ecole, certain that the carriage was not followed, was entirely reassured, and wishing to imitate La Chouette, who was sleeping, or, rather, who pretended to sleep, said to Rodolphe,

"Pardon me, young man, but the movement of the carriage always produces a singular effect; it makes me sleep like a child."

The brigand under the disguise of a false sleep wished to examine the features of his companion, to see if they betrayed any emotion.

Rodolphe, suspecting this, answered, "I got up early this morning, and I am very sleepy. I will do like you," and he shut his eyes.

Soon the deep breathing of the Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette, who snored in unison, so completely deceived Rodolphe, that, believing his companions sound asleep, he half opened his eyes. The Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette, notwithstanding their snores, had their eyes open, and were exchanging some mysterious signs, by means of their fingers curiously placed on the palms of their hands. All at once this ceased. The brigand, perceiving, without doubt, that Rodolphe was not asleep, cried, laughing, "Ah! ah! comrade, you are, then, proving your friends?" "That ought not to surprise you; you, who snore with your eyes wide open." "I? oh, that's a different thing; I am a somnambulist."

The carriage stopped at the Place de la Magdeleine. The rain had for a moment ceased, but the clouds, driven by the violence of the winds, were so black, and so low, that it was almost night. The trio turned their steps towards the "Cours de la Reine," the brigand said, "Young man, I have an idea—not a bad one—to assure myself that all you have said about the house in the 'Allée des Veuves' is true." "Do you wish to go there now? that would awaken suspicions; and, besides, it is hardly four o'clock." "I am not such a fool as that, young man! but I wonder why a man has a wife, whose name is Finette?" La Chouette raised her head proudly.

"Do you see her, young man? One would say she was a cavalry horse who had just heard the trumpet sound the charge." "You wish to send her there as a spy?" "Exactly." "Number 17 Allée des Veuves, is it not, my man?" cried La Chouette, impatiently: "be easy; I have only one eye, but it is a good one." "Do you see, do you see, young man? She burns to be off at once." "If she manages to get into the house adroitly, I do not think your plan a bad one. Take care of the umbrella, Fourline." "In a half hour I will be here, and you shall see that I know what to do," cried La Chouette. "Stop a moment, Finette; we will go into the 'Cœur Saignant.' It is only two steps from here. If the little 'Tortillard' (a lame person) is there, you can take him with you; he can remain at the door while you go in, and watch."

"You are right. He is as cunning as a fox, this little 'Tortillard'; he is not ten years old, and it is he who the other—" A sign from the Maitre d'Ecole interrupted La Chouette.

"What does it mean—the 'Cœur Saignant'? A strange name for a tavern," said Rodolphe. "You must complain of it to the tavernkeeper." "What is his name?" "He does not ask the name of his guests." "Yes, but—" "Oh, you can call him just what you please; Peter, Thomas, Christopher, or Barnaby; he'll always answer. But here we are, and just in time, for the rain begins again; and the river, how grand it is—like a torrent—do look! Two days more of such weather, and the water will be over the arch of the bridge." "You say that we have arrived: where the devil is the tavern? I don't see any house here!" "You don't look well around you." "Where do you want me to look?" "At your feet." "At my feet?" "Yes; look there! Can't you see the roof?"

Rodolphe had not perceived one of those subterranean taverns, that might have been seen a few years back, in certain parts of the Champs Elysées, especially near the "Cours de la Reine."

A staircase, cut in the damp soil, led to a sort of ditch or area; one side, cut perpendicularly, supported a sort of low, mean building with cracked walls; its roof of tiles covered with green moss, was hardly as high as the place where Rodolphe was standing; two or three hovels of worm-eaten wood, serving for sheds, storehouses, &c., were joined to this miserable dwelling. A very narrow passage, traversing the ditch through its whole length, led from the staircase to the door of the house; the remainder of the ground was covered with a sort of arbour, under which might be seen two rows of coarse tables firmly planted in the ground. The wretched tin sign, blown about by the wind, creaked sadly on its rusty hinges, and on it was painted a bleeding heart, pierced with an arrow. The post to which it was suspended reared its head high above this human kennel.

A heavy, thick fog was now added to the rain, and the night was rapidly approaching. "What do you think of this hotel, young man?" asked the Maitre d'Ecole. "Thanks to the rain that has fallen for two days, it ought not to be too damp—there must be fine fishing. Come, let us descend." "Stop a moment; I must first find out if the landlord is there. Attention!" and, rolling his tongue in a strange manner, he produced a singular cry, guttural and prolonged. A similar cry was returned from the house. "He is there," said the Maitre d'Ecole. "Pardon, young man! Respect to the ladies! Let

Chouette go down first. I'll follow you. Take care you don't fall—it is very slippery."

CHAPTER XVII.

LE CŒUR-SAIGNANT.

THE landlord of the "Bleeding Heart," after having replied to the signal of the Maitre d'Ecole, civilly advanced to the door to receive him. This person, whom Rodolphe had sought for in "la cité," and whom he did not yet know, was Bras-Rouge. Small and slender, weak and feeble, this man was about fifty years of age; his weasel-shaped face, his sharp nose, his retreating chin, his bony cheeks, his little, sharp, sparkling, black eyes, gave to him an inimitable expression of cunning, artifice, and intelligence. An old white wig, or, rather, yellow as his bilious complexion, placed on the top of his skull, did not conceal his grisly locks; and he wore a round jacket, with a long, black apron, such as is usually worn by the "garçons" of the wine-sellers. Our trio had hardly descended the steps, when a child of not more than ten years, very small, but with a very cunning look, sickly, lame, and slightly humpbacked, came and joined Bras-Rouge, to whom there was such a resemblance, that at once he would be recognised as his son. He had the same penetrating, cunning look; his forehead was almost concealed by thick yellow hair, coarse and stiff as a mane; trousers of a maroon colour, and a gray blouse, fastened with a leather belt, completed the costume of "Tortillard," so named in consequence of his deformity; he stood close alongside of his father, on his sound leg, like a heron on the borders of a swamp.

"Exactly! here is the 'môme,'" said the Maitre d'Ecole: "Finette, the time is short; night is coming. You must profit by the daylight that remains." "You are right, my man. I am going to ask his father for him." "Good-day, old man," said Bras-Rouge, addressing the Maitre d'Ecole in a sharp, false voice: "what can I do to serve you?" "I want you to lend your boy to my wife for a quarter of an hour. She has lost something near here: he will help her find it."

Bras-Rouge winked his eye, and made a sign to the bandit, saying to his son, "Tortillard, follow madame." This frightful child, attracted by the ugliness and by the wicked look of La Chouette, as other children are charmed by a good and benevolent expression of countenance, ran limping to take the hand of the Borgnesse. "My little love of a 'momacque,' come! There's a child for you," said Finette: "how it comes right to you: not like 'La Pegriotte,' who always looked as if she was sick at her stomach when she came near me, the little beggar." "Come, make haste, Finette! Open your eye, and look sharp. I'll wait for you here." "It shan't be long. Go on ahead, Tortillard!" and the Borgnesse and the lame boy mounted the slippery staircase. "Finette, take your umbrella, too," cried the brigand. "It will only be in my way, my man," answered the old woman, as she disappeared with Tortillard in the fog, now fast thickening into night, and amid the hollow sighings of the wind, which

agitated the dark branches, and despoiled the tall elms of the Champs Elysées.

"Let us enter," said Rodolphe, bowing his head as he passed through the door of the tavern. It was divided into two apartments; in the one was a bar and a billiard-table in bad condition; in the other, tables and garden-chairs that had once been green. Two narrow windows with small panes, and covered with spider webs, hardly lighted these rooms, whose green walls were saturated with humidity.

Rodolphe was left alone for a moment, while the two worthies had time for a few words and some mysterious signs.

"You will take a glass of beer or brandy while we are waiting for Finette!" said the Maitre d'Ecole. "No! I am not thirsty." "Every one to his liking. For myself, I'll drink a glass of brandy," added the brigand, seating himself at one of the small tables in the second room. It was getting to be so dark that it was impossible to see, in one of the corners of this room, the open entrance to one of the cellars, which was descended by steps, with two folding doors, one of which was left open for convenience of access.

The table by which the Maitre d'Ecole had seated himself was quite near this hole, to which he turned his back, in this manner concealing it from Rodolphe. The latter looked through the windows for occupation, and to conceal his anxiety. The sight of Murphy, walking quickly towards the "Allée des Veuves," did not altogether reassure him, for he feared he had not altogether been able to decipher his mysterious note. More than ever he trembled for fear of losing this opportunity of possessing the secrets he was so anxious to discover, and which he had so much interest to know. Although he was very vigorous, very resolute, and well armed, he had to struggle in cunning with a murderer capable of doing anything. Must we say it? Such was the energetic temper of his disposition, so singular, so eager for violent and strong emotions, that Rodolphe found a sort of terrible charm in his inquietudes, and in the obstacles that had frustrated the plans he had laid the evening before with his faithful Murphy and the Chourineur. However, not willing that he should be mistrusted, he came and seated himself at the table of the Maitre d'Ecole, and asked for a glass.

Bras-Rouge, since he had exchanged the few words with the Maitre d'Ecole, regarded Rodolphe with mistrust and defiance. "My advice, young man, is," said the Maitre d'Ecole, "that if my wife tells us the people we want to see are at home, we go and make them a visit at eight o'clock." "That will be too early by two hours," said Rodolphe; "it would inconvenience them." "Do you think so?" "I am sure of it." "Bah! among friends! Shouldn't stand upon ceremony." "I know them; and I repeat, we must not go before ten o'clock." "How headstrong you are, young man!" "It is my idea; and may the devil burn me if I stir from hence before ten o'clock." "Don't trouble yourself; I never shut up my establishment until midnight," said Bras-Rouge, in his shrill voice; "it is just the time my best customers come, and my neighbours don't complain of any noise that is made here." "I must consent to

everything you say, young man," said the Maitre d'Ecole. "So be it; we will make our visit at ten o'clock."

"Here is La Chouette," said Bras-Rouge, hearing and answering a cry similar to that made by the Maitre d'Ecole on arriving at this tavern. She entered alone, saying, "All right; understood." Bras-Rouge discreetly retired, without asking after Tortillard, whom he probably did not yet expect to see. The garments of the old woman were streaming with water. She seated herself opposite Rodolphe and the brigand. "Well?" said he. "This young man has told you the truth so far." "Ah! do you see?" cried Rodolphe. "Let La Chouette tell her story, young man. Come, go on, Finette."

"I arrived at No. 17, leaving Tortillard concealed in a hole to watch. It was still light. I rang at a little low door—hinges on the outside—two inches of daylight under the sill—in fine, nothing else. I rang, the porter opened it. He is a large, stout man, of about fifty, with a sleepy, good-humoured look, red whiskers, and bald head. Before I rang, I had put my cap in my pocket, so that I might appear to be one of the neighbours. As soon as I saw him, I began to weep bitterly, saying that I had lost my parrot, Cocotte, a little animal that I adored. I said that I lived in the avenue Morbeuf, and that I had pursued my favourite from garden to garden. Finally, I begged him to let me look for my pet in his garden." "Hem!" said the Maitre d'Ecole, pointing to La Chouette with an air of proud satisfaction; "what a woman!" "It is very adroit," said Rodolphe; "but what then?" "The porter allowed me to look for my bird, and I ran all over the garden, crying 'Cocotte! Cocotte!' looking in the air and on all sides, so as to see everything. Within the walls, trellises on every side, a real staircase; at the corner of the wall there is a pine-tree, cut like a ladder; a woman 'enceinte' could descend with ease. The house has six windows on the ground floor; there is no upper story; and there are four air holes to the cellar, without iron bars. The windows are all closed with shutters, fastened below. Staple above; push it down, and draw the wire." "An't worth a rush," said the Maitre d'Ecole; "all is open."

La Chouette continued.

"The door glazed—two blinds without." "A memorandum," said the brigand. "It is exact, just as if I could see it," cried Rodolphe. "On the left there is a well," continued La Chouette. "The rope may be of use, because on that side there are no trellises, if retreat should be cut off, on the side of the door as you enter the house." "Did you enter the house?" "She entered the house, young man," said the Maitre d'Ecole with pride.

"Certainly I entered. Not finding Cocotte, I groaned as if I was quite exhausted, and asked permission of the porter to seat myself on the steps. The good man asked me to enter, and offered me a glass of wine and water. 'A simple glass of water,' said I, 'my good sir.' He then asked me to enter into the antechamber: carpeted all over, good precaution; footsteps can't be heard, nor smashing of windows, if it should be necessary to break a pane; to the right and left doors with common locks; can

almost open them, by blowing. At the end, a strong door, locked; had the look of a chest; it smelt of silver! I had my wax in my 'cabas.'" "She had her wax, young man! She never goes without her wax!" said the brigand.

Chouette continued. "I wanted to get near that door, so I pretended to be taken with a violent cough, so violent, that I was forced to lean against the wall. Hearing me cough, the porter said, 'I will go and get a bit of sugar.' He probably had to get a spoon, for I heard the rattling of silver. Silver in the right-hand room: don't forget that, Fourline. Finally, what with coughing, and groaning, I reached the door. I had the wax in the palm of my hand, and I leaned against the lock, as if it were nothing. Here is the print; if it don't answer for to-day, it will for another time; and now you can tell us if it is the door of the chest."

"Exactly! there is where the money is," answered Rodolphe.

"But all the money is not there!" cried La Chouette, her green eye twinkling. "In approaching the window, still pretending to look for Cocotte, I saw in one of the rooms, at the left of the door, bags of dollars on a bureau. I saw them as plain as I see you, my man. There were at least a dozen."

"Where was Tortillard?" said the Maitre d'Ecole, roughly.

"He was all the while in his hole, two steps from the door of the garden. He sees in the dark like a cat. There is no other entrance to No. 17. When we go there, he can tell us if any one has come." "It is good."

Hardly had he pronounced these words, when the Maitre d'Ecole threw himself suddenly on Rodolphe, caught him by the throat, and threw him backward into the cellar, which was open, behind the table. This attack was so sudden, so unexpected, so vigorous, that Rodolphe was not able to foresee or prevent it. La Chouette, frightened, gave a loud scream. She had not, at once, seen the result of this attack. As soon as the noise of the falling body had ceased, the Maitre d'Ecole, who was perfectly acquainted with the subterranean apartments of the house, descended slowly into the cellar, listening with attention. "'Fourline,' take care!" cried La Borgnesse, leaning over the opening. "Draw your dirk." The brigand did not reply, but disappeared. At first nothing was heard; but after a few moments, the distant noise of a door, grating on its rusty hinges, sounded heavily through the cellar, and then again all was still. The obscurity was complete. La Chouette, rummaging in her "cabas," struck a light from a lucifer match, which, applied to a small candle, spread its sickly rays around the gloomy room.

At this moment the horrid figure of the Maitre d'Ecole appeared at the opening of the trap. La Chouette was not able to restrain an exclamation of affright at the sight of his pale, mutilated face, with eyes almost phosphorescent, which seemed to crawl on the ground in the midst of the darkness, which the feeble glimmer of the candle hardly dispelled. Hardly recovered from her emotion, the old woman cried, with a kind of humble flattery, "You must, indeed, look frightful; for you made me afraid—Me!"

"Quick! quick! to the Allée des Veuves,"

said the brigand, shutting the cellar doors, and fastening them with a bar of iron. "In an hour it will be too late!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CELLAR.

RODOLPHE fainted from the effects of the blow, and fell almost lifeless at the foot of the staircase. The Maitre d'Ecole, dragging him to the entrance of a second cellar, which was much deeper, pushed him in, and closed the door, which was very thick, and fastened with iron; after which he had rejoined La Chouette, to go with her to commit a robbery, perhaps a murder, in the Allée des Veuves. In about an hour Rodolphe came to himself, and found that he was lying on the ground, amid the most profound darkness. Stretching out his arms, he felt the stone steps; and finding his feet were cold and wet, he moved them, and perceived that they were immersed in a pool of water. With a violent effort he succeeded in seating himself on the lowest step of the staircase, and as he slowly recovered from his fainting fit, he found that happily none of his limbs were fractured. He listened. He heard nothing—nothing but a sort of dripping, dull, faint, but continual. At first he did not suspect the cause, but as he came more to himself, the surprise to which he had been a victim, all the circumstances came slowly to his recollection. He felt the water now over his ankles. His fears were awakened. He comprehended, at length, his situation. The swelling of the Seine was formidable, and this place was beneath the level of the river. His danger recalled Rodolphe to himself. Quick as a flash he mounted the damp staircase, and, arrived at the top, he threw himself against the door. In vain he tried to move it; immovable and firm with its bars of iron, his efforts were fruitless. In this desperate situation his first thought was about Murphy. "If he is not on his guard, this monster will assassinate him. It is I," cried he, "who will have caused his death. Poor Murphy!"

This cruel thought augmented the strength of Rodolphe. Supporting himself on his feet, and bending his shoulders, he exhausted himself in vain efforts to move the door. Hoping to find some lever or instrument in the cave, he descended the steps. Two or three round elastic bodies ran from his feet: they were rats, which the water had driven from their holes. He groped about, but found nothing. The water was now to the height of his knees; so he returned to the staircase, in a state of unutterable despair. He counted the steps: there were thirteen; and three were already submerged.

Thirteen! fatal number! In certain positions the strongest minds are not free from superstition; Rodolphe saw in this number a bad omen. The fate of Murphy returned to his mind, and he sought in vain for some opening, between the ground and the door, which was doubtless swollen by the dampness; his efforts were unavailing.

Rodolphe then, in despair, shouted at the top

of his voice, with the faint hope that he might be heard by some of the "habitués" of the tavern. He listened: naught was heard but the noise of the dripping water, continual—always mounting—mounting—mounting! He then seated himself on the topmost step, his thoughts always recurring to the situation of Murphy, who, perhaps, at that moment was dying under the assassin's knife. Bitterly he regretted his bold and imprudent projects, although their motive was generous. He recalled to his mind the thousand proofs of the devotion of Murphy, who, rich and honoured, had left his wife and child, his dearest interests, to follow him in the valiant but strange penance which he had imposed on himself.

The water continued to rise: but five steps remained dry. In rising and standing near the door, his head touched the top of the vault; he could calculate how long his agony would last. His death would be slow, silent, frightful. He thought of his pistol; at the risk of wounding himself, he could fire at the door, and perhaps break it down; but alas, alas! in his fall this arm had been lost, or carried off by the Maitre d'Ecole. If it had not been for his fears for Murphy, Rodolphe had awaited death with serenity. He had lived long; he had been ardently loved; he had done a great deal of good; he could have wished to do more. God knew it! He did not murmur against his fate, he saw in it a just punishment for a fatal action, not yet expiated; his ideas were exalted, purified by this danger: but a new torment came to augment the horrors of his position, and to try his resignation.

The rats, driven by the water, had fled from step to step, in vain trying to escape. Finding it difficult to hold on by the walls, they caught hold of the garments of Rodolphe. When he felt them swarming about him, his disgust, his horror, were inexpressible. He tried to drive them away; but cold and sharp bites imbrued his hands with blood. In his fall his vest and blouse had been torn open: he felt on his naked breast the touch of icy paws; and as often as he tore them off and threw them at a distance, they would return swimming. Again, again he shouted: no one heard him. In a few moments his cries would cease; the water was up to his neck, and would soon cover his mouth. Pure air began to fail; the first symptoms of apoplexy attacked Rodolphe; the arteries of his temples began to beat with violence; his head swam—he was about to die. He gave one last thought to Murphy, and raised his prayer to God, not that he would deliver him from punishment, but that he would accept his sufferings.

At this awful moment, on the point of quitting not only all that made life desirable, brilliant, envied, but also a title almost royal, a *sovereign power*; forced to renounce an enterprise which, in satisfying two of his fondest natural impulses, *the love of the good and hatred of the wicked*, he might one day have counted on as an expiation for his faults; about perishing by a horrible death, Rodolphe had not for a moment one feeling of anger or useless phrensy, during which a feeble mind would accuse or curse, in turn, man, fate, and God. No: as long as his mind remained clear, Ro-

dolphe supported his fate with submission, with resignation. When his faculties were obscured by agony, when absolutely delivered to vital and natural impulses, he struggled, if it can be said, physically, but not morally, against death. His consciousness was almost lost; the water boiled around his ears; the last ray of reason was about leaving him forever, when hurried steps, and a noise of voices, resounded above the door of the cellar. Hope animated his dying strength; and he could just hear these words, the last he could comprehend:

"You see there is nobody here."

"Thunder! it is true," answered sadly the voice of the Chourineur, and the footsteps retreated.

Rodolphe, annihilated, could sustain himself no longer; he slipped from the staircase.

Suddenly the door of the cellar was opened from without; the water flowed out like a sluice, and the Chourineur could just seize the two arms of Rodolphe, who, half drowned, had, with a convulsive movement, clung to the sill of the doorway.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE NURSE.

SNATCHED from a certain death by the Chourineur, and carried to the house in the Allée des Veuves, Rodolphe was placed in bed, in a chamber comfortably furnished. A large fire blazed in the fireplace, a lamp placed on a commode spread a clear light through the apartment; the bed of Rodolphe was surrounded by thick curtains of green damask, which concealed its occupant from the light.

A negro of middling size, with a white, woolly head, clothed with great neatness, and wearing an orange and green riband at the button-hole of his blue coat, held in his hand a gold minute watch, which he seemed to consult as he counted with his right hand the pulse of Rodolphe: sad and pensive, he regarded his patient with the most profound solicitude. The Chourineur, clothed in rags, covered with mud, remained immovable at the foot of the bed, with his arms crossed; his red, shaggy beard was dripping with water; and his hard and bronzed features wore an ineffable expression of pity and interest. Hardly daring to breathe, he watched the contemplative attitude of the doctor, and seemed to draw from it an ill omen; and he muttered to himself in a low tone, "Who could think, to see him weak and feeble as he is, that he could have ever given me such blows on my head. It won't be long before he recovers his strength, will it, doctor? Foi d'homme, I wish he could beat his convalescence on my back; it would do him good, wouldn't it, doctor?"

The black made a slight sign with his hand. "Give me the potion." The Chourineur, who had left his nailed shoes at the door, went towards the commode, stepping lightly on the end of his toes, but with such contortions of his body, such balancings of his arms, such swellings of his back and shoulders, that under any other circumstances would have been highly ludicrous. The poor devil seemed as if he wish-

ed to throw all his weight on that part of himself that did not touch the floor; which, however, notwithstanding the carpet, did not prevent the floor from groaning under his weight. Unluckily, in his ardour to do well, and from fear of letting the glass vial fall, he squeezed it so tight in his large hands that it was broken, and its contents spilled upon the carpet. At the sight of this mishap the Chourineur remained immovable, one of his large legs being in the air, the toes nervously contracted, looking alternately in a confused manner at the doctor and at the neck of the bottle which remained in his hand. "What a devil of an awkward fellow!" cried the negro, impatiently. "Thunder of a fool!" added the Chourineur, apostrophizing himself.

"Ah!" said the Esculapius, looking at the commode, "fortunately you took the wrong bottle. I want the other one."

"The little red one?" asked the unfortunate nurse.

"To be sure: there is no other." The Chourineur, in turning on his heels, according to his old military habits, crashed the remains of the vial: tender feet would have been cruelly wounded; but our friend, thanks to his profession, had a pair of natural sandals, hard as the hoof of a horse. "Take care, you will hurt yourself," cried the physician. The Chourineur paid not the least attention to this advice. Profoundly occupied with his new mission, which he wished to execute skilfully, to make up for his first awkwardness, one should have seen with what delicacy, with what agility, with what care, he took hold of the frail glass with two fingers. A butterfly could not have left an atom of the golden dust of its wings between the forefinger and thumb of the Chourineur. The black doctor shuddered at this excess of precaution, happily without cause. The Chourineur, in approaching the bed, again stepped on the broken glass.

"Do you wish to lame yourself?" said the doctor, in a low voice. The Chourineur looked at him with surprise. "What! lame myself, doctor?" "Yes, twice you have stepped on the broken glass." "Oh! if that is all, never mind. I have the soles of my feet lined with leather." "A small spoon," said the doctor. The Chourineur recommenced his sylphlike movements, and brought what the doctor had demanded.

After some spoonfuls of this potion, Rodolphe made a slight movement, and moved his hands. "Good! good! He is aroused from his torpor," said the doctor. "The bleeding has saved him; he will soon be out of danger."

"Saved? Bravo! Vive la Charité!" cried the Chourineur, in the explosion of his joy. "But you must be quiet!" "Yes, doctor." "The pulse improves, wonderfully! wonderfully!" "And the poor friend of Monsieur Rodolphe, doctor? Thunder! when he knows, happily that—" "Silence!" "Yes, doctor." "Take a seat." "But, doctor—" "Take a seat. You worry me by moving around me; it disturbs me. Come, take a seat!" "Doctor, I am as dirty as a bunch of floating fagots that one is about to— I should soil the furniture." "Then sit on the floor." "I should spoil the carpet." "Do as you please; but in the name

of Heaven remain quiet," said the doctor, in a tone of impatience; and seating himself in an arm-chair, he leaned his head on his hands.

After a moment of profound thought, the Chourineur, less on account of his fatigue than to obey the doctor, took hold of a chair with the greatest precaution, and turned it upside down with a perfectly satisfied and assured air, intending to seat himself modestly on the back spoked, so as to soil nothing. Unfortunately, quite unacquainted with the laws of gravity, as he sat down the chair overturned. The unfortunate man, with an involuntary movement, stretched out his hand, and overturned a stand on which was a salver with cups and saucers.

At this formidable noise, the black doctor sprang from his chair, and Rodolphe, also awaking with a start, sat up in bed, looked around with anxiety, and asked, "Where is Murphy? where is Murphy?"

"Be assured, your highness," said the black, respectfully, "there is hope." "Was he wounded?" cried Rodolphe.

"Alas! yes, my lord." "Where is he? I wish to see him," said he, trying to raise himself; but he fell back from pain and exhaustion.

"Let me be carried at once to Murphy, since I am unable to walk!" cried he. "My lord, he is now sleeping: it would be dangerous to cause him any emotion." "Ah! you deceive me; he is dead! He is murdered! and it is I—I who am the cause," cried Rodolphe, raising his hands towards heaven.

"My lord knows I am incapable of telling a falsehood. I affirm, on my honour, that Monsieur Murphy is living—very badly wounded, it is true; but the chances of his cure are almost certain." "You tell me this to prepare me for some frightful news. He is doubtless in a desperate state!" "My lord—" "I am sure of it. You deceive me. I must be carried to him at once; the sight of a friend will do him good." "Once more, my lord, I affirm on my honour that, unless something unforeseen should arise, Monsieur Murphy will soon be convalescent."

"The truth, the whole truth, my dear David?"

"The whole truth, my lord." "Listen, you know my regard for you. Since you have belonged to my house you have always had my confidence. Never have I doubted your great skill; but for the love of Heaven, if a consultation is necessary—" "That was my first thought, my lord; but at present it is useless, you can believe me. And besides, I did not wish to introduce strangers here before knowing if your orders of yesterday—" "But how did all this happen?" said Rodolphe, interrupting him. "Who took me from the cellar where I was drowning? I have a confused recollection of having heard the voice of the Chourineur: was I mistaken?" "No, no! this brave man can tell you all about it, my lord, for he has done all."

"But where is he? where is he?" The doctor looked around for the awkward nurse, who, confused at his fall, had hidden himself behind the curtain of the bed.

"There he is," cried the doctor; "he looks quite confused." "Come here, my good fellow!" said Rodolphe, stretching out his hand to his preserver.

CHAPTER XX.

STORY OF THE CHOURINEUR.

THE confusion of the Chourineur was so much the more profound, as he had heard the black doctor call Rodolphe "*My Lord*," several times. "But draw near and give me your hand," said Rodolphe. "Pardon, Monsieur—no, I mean to say my Lord; but—" "Call me Rodolphe, as before; I like it better." "And for me also, I shall feel more easy. But excuse my hand, I have done much work since—" and he put out timidly his black and bony hand. Rodolphe pressed it cordially. "Come," said he, "sit down, and tell me all. How did you discover the cellar?—But, on reflection, the *Maitre d'Ecole*!"

"Is here in safety," said the black physician. "Tied like two bunches of tobacco—he and La Chouette. From the pretty faces they make, when they look at each other, they must cordially hate one another just now." "And my poor Murphy! *mon Dieu*! and I only think of it now! David, where is he wounded?" "In the right side, my lord; happily towards the last false rib." "Oh! I must have terrible revenge! David, I count on you." "My lord knows that I am his, body and soul," answered the black, coldly. "But how did you arrive in time, my good fellow?" said Rodolphe to the Chourineur. "If you will, my lord—no, Monsieur Rodolphe, I will begin at the beginning." "You are right: I listen."

"You know that last night you told me, after you had returned from the country, where you had been with the poor Goualeuse, 'Try to find the *Maitre d'Ecole* in the cité: you will tell him that you know of some good affair, that you do not wish to have anything to do with it; but that if he wishes to take your place, he has only to go to-morrow (this morning) to the *barrière* of Bercy, at the *Panier-Flouri*, and there he will find some one who can give farther information.' Very well, in leaving you I ran to the cité. I went to the *Ogresso*: no *Maitre d'Ecole* there. I walked through the streets of Saint-Eloi aux Fèves, and the *Vieille-Draperie*: nobody there. Finally, I caught him with that screw of a *Chouette* at the *Parvis de Notre Dame*, at the house of a little tailor, a pawnbroker, receiver, or thief. They wanted to make a dash with the money they had stolen from the tall man in mourning, who wished to do something with you. La *Chouette* was cheapening a red shawl—the old monster! I told my business to the *Maitre d'Ecole*; he said it suited him, and he would be at the rendezvous. Good! This morning, according to your order, I came here to give you the answer. You said, '*Mon garçon*, return to-morrow before light. You shall pass the day here, and at night you shall see something worth your trouble.' You said no more; but I understood. I said to myself, 'This is something got up to play a trick on the *Maitre d'Ecole* to-morrow morning: holding out a bait. He is an old villain: he killed the cattle-merchant. I am in for it.'"

"And my error was, not to have told you all, *mon garçon*. This frightful evil would not, perhaps, have happened." "That regards you, Monsieur Rodolphe. That which regards me

was to serve you; because, in fine, I don't know why, I have already told you, I feel myself to be your bulldog." "Well, enough." "I said to myself then, 'To-morrow shall be a holyday; to-day I had leave. Monsieur Rodolphe has paid me for the two days I have lost, and two others in advance; for, do you see? here are three days that I have not been to my masters'; and not being a millionaire, labour is my bread.' I added, 'Stop, it is right; M. Rodolphe pays me for my time; my time belongs to him. I'll go and employ it for him.' The thought gave me this idea: 'The Maître d'Ecole is cunning; he will no doubt fear a trap. M. Rodolphe will propose to him something for to-morrow, it is true; but the "gueux" is capable of coming here in the day-time to reconnoitre; and if he is at all suspicious, to bring along another robber, or to say "agreed" for to-morrow, and to do the job on his own account to-day.'"

"You have wisely imagined. Just so it happened, and Providence has willed that I should owe my life to you." "It is astonishing, Monsieur Rodolphe, how, since I have known you, things have happened to me, that appear to have been contrived up yonder! and that I have had thoughts I never had before, since you said to me, 'You have yet a heart and honour.' Heart! honour! Thunder! these words appear to stir up something inside. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, when one is accustomed to hear the cry of mad dog! mad dog! if he wishes only to approach honest people—"

"So you have had thoughts that are new to you?"

"Surely, Monsieur Rodolphe. 'Stop,' said I to myself again. 'Now if I should know some one who had done a bad action; drink—anger—no matter what, I would say to him, 'My man, you have done wrong:' good. But this is not all: *ce n'est pas pour le roi de Prusse*, that *le bon Dieu* makes a man who may drown himself or starve with hunger. 'Come, let us be friends: if you make forty sous a day, give twenty to some poor old souls, or to little children; to any one who may be more unfortunate than you are, who has neither bread nor strength; and, above all, don't forget, my man, that if there is some one to be saved at the risk of your hide, it is your business! If you do, and you begin again your bad tricks, you will always find me—' But I ask pardon, Monsieur Rodolphe, I am talking away—and you are currids to know—"No; I like to hear you talk thus. And besides, I shall know only too soon how this horrible affair has happened, to which my poor Murphy has fallen a victim. I felt sure that I should not leave the Maître d'Ecole for a moment during this dangerous enterprise. Then he should have killed me a thousand times before he touched Murphy. Alas! fate has decided otherwise. Continue, mon garçon."

"Willing, then, to employ my time for you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I said, 'I must go and hide myself in some place, where I can see the walls and the garden door; that is the sole entrance. If I find a snug corner—it rains—I'll remain all day, all night, and to-morrow morning I shall be at hand.' It was about two

o'clock, when I said that to myself, 'aux Batignolles,' where I went to eat a mouthful. After leaving you, Monsieur Rodolphe, I returned to the Champs Elysées. I looked out for my nest. What do I see? A little tavern only ten steps from your door. I took possession of the lower floor, and seated myself near a window. I ordered some nuts and some drink, saying I expected some friends: a hump-back, and a tall woman, it was quite likely. From my place I had a complete view of your door. It rained tremendously; no one passed—night came."

"But," said Rodolphe, interrupting the Chourineur, "why did you not go to my house?"

"You told me to come the next morning, Monsieur Rodolphe. I did not dare to come sooner. It would have looked like skulking—le brousseur, as the troopers say. After all, I am what I am, a liberated galley-slave; and when any one is with me, as you are, Monsieur Rodolphe, one must only go to him when he says, 'Come.' After that, if I should see a spider on the collar of your coat, I'd take him off, and crush him, without asking your permission; you understand! So I was then at the window, cracking my nuts, and drinking my wine, when through the fog, whom should I see but La Chouette, with the 'môme' of Bras-Rouge, little Tortillard?"

"Bras-Rouge! is he, then, the keeper of the tavern in the Champs Elysées?" cried Rodolphe. "Yes, sir: did you not know it?" "No. I thought he lived in the cité." "He lives there also: he lives everywhere. Bras-Rouge is a cunning and proud 'gueux,' with his yellow wig and pointed nose! To go on, when I saw Chouette and Tortillard, I said, 'Good; it begins to grow warm!' Tortillard hid himself in one of the ditches of the 'allée,' right opposite your door, just as if he was getting shelter from the rain: he was on the watch. La Chouette took off her bonnet, put it in her pocket, and rang at the door. Poor Monsieur Murphy, your friend, came and opened it; and she went throwing about her arms, and running about the garden. I would have given my tongue to the dogs, I thought, if I could only find out what La Chouette wanted. Finally, she came out, put on her cap, said two words to Tortillard, who went back to his hole, and cleared out. I reflected a minute: 'Don't get perplexed. Tortillard is come with La Chouette: the Maître d'Ecole and Monsieur Rodolphe are there at Bras-Rouge's.'"

"Well, after that?" "La Chouette has come to spy; the affair will, then, come off to-night! They will do it to-night. M. Rodolphe thinks it will take place to-morrow. He is, then, enfoncé?" "Well!"

"M. Rodolphe is done for. I must go to Bras-Rouge's. I'll see what it all means. Yes; but if during this time the Maître d'Ecole should come! It is night, it is true: so much the worse. I'll go and say to M. Murphy, "Look out." Yes, but that little vermin of a Tortillard is there near the door. He'll hear me ring; he'll see me; he'll give La Chouette warning. If she returns, that will spoil all. And besides, perhaps M. Rodolphe has arranged for to-night." Thunder, these yeas and nays made my brain

whirl. I was confounded. I could see nothing but fire. I did not know what to do. I said, 'I'll go out; perhaps the fresh air will assist me.' It did assist me. I took off my blouse and cravat, and went straight to the burrow of Tortillard. I took the 'moutard' by the back of the neck: he kicked, and scratched, and squaled, I tell you. I wrapped him in my blouse, making a bag of it by tying one end with the sleeves, and the other with my cravat, and just leaving room enough to breathe; I took the packet under my arm, and seeing near by a sort of garden very marshy, surrounded by a low wall, I threw Tortillard in the middle of a bed of carrots. He grunted like a pig, but at two steps off he could not be heard. I started off; it was time! I climbed on one of the large trees of the allée, just opposite your door, over the hiding-place of Tortillard. Ten minutes after, I heard steps; all the time raising cats and dogs. It was so dark—so dark that the devil would have stepped on his tail. I listened: it was La Chouette. 'Tortillard! Tortillard!' whispered she. Yes, look for him, your Tortillard. 'It rains, and the "môme" has got tired of waiting,' said the Maître d'Ecole, swearing: 'if I catch him, he'll take a scorching.' 'Fourline, take care,' answered La Chouette. 'Perhaps he has gone to tell us something: if it should be a trap! He didn't want to do it until 10 o'clock.' 'That's just the reason,' answered the Maître d'Ecole; 'it is now only seven. You have seen money; who risks nothing, nothing gains. Give me the pincers and the cold chisel.'

"These instruments?" asked Rodolphe.

"They came from Bras-Rouge's. Oh, he has a house well furnished. In a moment, the door is forced. 'Remain there,' said the Maître d'Ecole to La Chouette. 'Look out, and cry, "Take care," if you hear anything.' 'Put your dirk in your buttonhole, so as to have it handy,' said La Borgnesse, as the Maître d'Ecole entered the garden. I thought at once, 'M. Rodolphe is not here: he is dead, or he is living at this moment. I can do nothing for him; but the friends of our friend are ours.' Oh, no! pardon, my lord!"

"Go on! go on! Well?" "I said, 'The Maître d'Ecole may murder M. Murphy, the friend of M. Rodolphe, who expects no danger.' It was then I began to get warm. I jumped from the tree, and pounced upon La Chouette. I silenced her with two blows of the fist—choice ones. She fell without a whimper. I ran into the garden: Thunder! Monsieur Rodolphe, it was too late. Poor Murphy! Hearing the noise at the door, he had doubtless come out of the vestibule, and closing with the Maître d'Ecole, they rolled together down the steps. Already wounded, he kept himself firm, and did not cry for help. 'Brave man! he is like the good dogs, which bite with their teeth, and not with the mouth,' as I said to myself. I pitched right into the affray, catching hold of the Maître d'Ecole by one leg; it was the only disposable part for the moment. 'Vive la Charte! it is I! the Chourineur! the Chourineur! Room for two, Monsieur Murphy!' 'Ah! brigand! where do you come from?' cried the Maître d'Ecole, alarmed at this. 'Don't be so curious,' I answered, squeezing his leg between my knees, and clipping one of his wings. It was the one

with the poniard—the good one. 'Eh! Rodolphe!' cried Murphy, helping me all he could."

"Brave, excellent man!" murmured Rodolphe, sadly.

"I knew nothing about him," I answered. 'This scoundrel perhaps has killed him.' And I hugged the Maître d'Ecole tighter, for he was trying to stick me with his skewer; but as I was lying with my breast on his arm, he had only his fist clear. 'You are then alone!' I said to M. Murphy, as we still struggled with the villain. 'There are others near at hand, but they cannot hear us cry.' 'Shout for help; there may be some one passing.' 'No: since we have got him, we must keep him here; but I feel weak—I am wounded,' said M. Murphy. 'Thunder! go, then, and seek for assistance, if you are able. I will try to hold him. Take away his knife; help me to get well on him; and if he were ten times as strong, I'd hold him.' The Maître d'Ecole said nothing, but you could hear him blow like an ox; but, thunder! what efforts! M. Murphy could not get the knife out of his hands; the fist of that man is like a vice. Finally, by bearing with all my might on his right arm, I got my arms around his neck, just as if I wished to embrace him. To crook him in that manner, was the height of my ambition. Then I said to M. Murphy, 'Make haste: I'll wait for you. If you have one too many, let him pick up La Chouette, behind the door of the garden, I have stunned her.' I remained alone with the Maître d'Ecole. He knew what he had to expect."

"He did not know it! nor you, my good fellow," said Rodolphe, with a gloomy look, his features contracted with that hard, almost ferocious expression, of which we have spoken.

The Chourineur, astonished, said to Rodolphe, "I thought that the Chourineur knew what he had to expect, for, thunder! it is not to brag. But there was one moment, when I was not at a wedding. We were half on the ground, half on the last step of the porch. I had my arms around his neck—cheek against cheek. I could hear his teeth grind. It was dark—raining all the while; but the lamp remaining in the vestibule gave us a faint light. I had one of his legs between mine. Notwithstanding, his muscles were so strong, that he would raise us both a foot from the ground. He tried to bite, but he could not. Never did I feel so strong. Thunder! my heart beat, but in the right place. I said, 'I am like a person holding a mad dog to prevent him from biting everybody.' 'Let me go, and I will do nothing to you,' said he. 'Ah! you're a coward,' cried I. 'Your courage is only in your strength. You would not have dared to kill the cattle merchant of Poissy, if he had been as strong as I am, heu!' 'No,' said he; 'but I am going to kill you like him!' Saying this, he made such a quick and violent movement, that he succeeded in throwing me off; but I kept my hold around his neck, his right arm under me. His legs once free, he made good use of them. It gave him hope: he turned me half over; and if I had not held on to the sword arm, it was all up with me—finished. At this moment my left hand gave out, I was obliged to loosen my fingers. That spoiled all. I said to myself, 'I am under: he will kill me. Never mind, I'd rather be in my

place than his.' M. Rodolphe told me that I had courage and honour—I felt it was true. I was just thinking, when I saw La Chouette on the step, with her round eye, and her red shawl. Thunder! I thought I had the nightmare. 'Finette!' cried the Maitre-d'Ecole, 'I have dropped my knife; pick it up—there—under him; and strike—in the back—between the shoulders.' 'Wait, wait, Fourline, until I look.' And there was La Chouette, turning and turning like a bird of ill omen, as she is. At last, she saw the poniard, and sprang to get it. I was flat on my belly, and fetched her such a kick with my heel in her stomach, that I upset her; but she soon raised herself and fell upon me. I could do no more, I clung still to the neck of the Maitre d'Ecole; but he gave me such blows in my mouth, that I was about to give up; I began to be faint, when I saw three or four fine fellows well armed running down the steps; and M. Murphy, very pale, and supported by the physician. They seized the Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette, and secured them. That was not all. I wanted M. Rodolphe. I jumped on La Chouette. I remembered the tooth of the poor Goualeuse, and catching hold of her arm, gave it a twist, saying, 'Where is M. Rodolphe?' She held quiet. At the second twist, she cried, 'At Bras-Rouge's—in the cellar of the "Cœur Saignant." Good. In passing, I stopped to pick up Tortillard from his caroty bed: it was all in my road. I looked—there was nothing left but my blouse: he had gnawed it with his teeth. I reached the 'Cœur Saignant': I jumped at the throat of Bras-Rouge: 'Where is the young man who came here to-night with the Maitre d'Ecole?' 'Don't squeeze so hard, and I will tell you. They wanted to play a trick on him, and shut him in my cellar: we will go and let him out.' We descended—no one there. 'He must have gone out when my back was turned,' said Bras-Rouge; 'you see there is no one there.' I was about going sadly away, when, by the light of the lantern, I saw another door. I ran and opened it, and received a famous 'jet d'eau' right in my face. I saw your two poor arms in the air. I fished you out, and brought you here on my back, as there was no one to go and call a coach. That's all, Monsieur Rodolphe; and I can say, without boasting, that I am most proudly content!"

"Mon garçon, I owe you my life. It is a debt; and I will pay it, be assured, in many ways. You have so much heart, that you will partake of the sentiments which inspire me at this hour. I feel a fearful inquietude for the friend whom you have so bravely defended; a thirst for vengeance against him, who had so nearly killed you both." "I can comprehend that, Monsieur Rodolphe. To jump on you like a thief, throw you into a cellar so you might drown—the Maitre d'Ecole merits his fate. He acknowledged to me, that he killed the cattle-merchant. I am no coward, but thunder! I would go now, willingly, to call the guard, to take this brigand!" "David, will you go and see how Murphy is?" said Rodolphe, without replying to the Chourineur: "you can then return." The black went out.

"Do you know where the Maitre d'Ecole is, mon garçon?" "No. Do you want to let him

go? Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, no such generosity! I repeat what I have said; he is a mad dog—look out, passers by!" "He never shall bite any one again, be assured." "You are going to shut him up somewhere?" "No. In half an hour he shall go hence." "The Maitre d'Ecole?" "Yes." "Without gendarmes?" "Yes." "How, shall he go out free?" "Free." "And all alone?" "Yes, all alone. He shall go where he likes," said Rodolphe, interrupting the Chourineur, with a smile that terrified him. The black returned. "Well, David—and Murphy?" "He sleeps, my lord," said the physician, sadly. "The respiration is quite oppressed." "There is still danger!" "His situation is very serious, my lord. However, we must hope." "Oh! Murphy! vengeance! vengeance!" cried Rodolphe. "David, one word!" and he whispered in the ear of the black. He trembled. "You hesitate!" said Rodolphe to him; "I have often mentioned this thing to you. The moment to make the application is come." "I do not hesitate, my lord. I approve of this idea. It comprises a penal reform worthy of the examination of those who are versed in criminal matters; for this punishment will be simple, and at the same time terrible and just. In this case it is applicable. Without enumerating the crimes which sent this brigand to the galleys for life, he has committed three murders: the cattle-merchant, Murphy, and yourself. It is justice." "He will still have before him the horizon without end, of repentance," added Rodolphe; "well, David, you understand me?" "We act in concurrence, my lord." After a moment's silence, Rodolphe added: "You think five thousand francs will answer, David?" "Perfectly, my lord." "Mon garçon," said Rodolphe to the amazed Chourineur, "I have two words to say to this gentleman. In the mean time, go into the adjoining room. You will find a large red portfolio on a bureau: take out of it five thousand francs, and bring them to me."

"And for whom are these five thousand francs?" said the Chourineur, involuntarily. "For the Maitre d'Ecole; and, at the same time, you can tell them to bring him hither."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE PUNISHMENT.

THE scene is changed to a room hung with red, and brilliantly lighted. Rodolphe, clothed in a long dressing-gown of black velvet, which increased the pallor of his face, is seated before a large table covered with a cloth. On this table are seen two portfolios, the one which was stolen from Tom by the Maitre d'Ecole in la eité, and that which was the property of the brigand; the chain of La Chouette, to which was suspended the little "Saint Esprit" in "lapis lazule;" the poniard, still bloody, which had stabbed Murphy; the iron pincers, which had been used to break open the door; and, finally, the five thousand francs, which the Chourineur had brought from the adjoining room.

The black doctor is seated on one side of the table, the Chourineur at the other. The Maitre d'Ecole, strongly bound, so that it was impossi-

he to stir, is placed in a large arm-chair on wheels, in the middle of the room. No one else was present. Rodolphe is no longer irritable; he is calm, sad, collected. He is about to accomplish a solemn and formidable mission.

The doctor is pensive. The Chourineur cannot take his eyes from Rodolphe; a vague fear oppresses him.

The Maître d'Ecole is livid—he is afraid.

A legal arrest, perhaps, had appeared less formidable. His audacity would not have forsaken him before an ordinary tribunal; but everything that now surrounded him surprised, alarmed him. He is in the power of Rodolphe, whom he had considered as a man capable of betraying him when about to commit a crime, and whom he had wished to sacrifice to this suspicion, with the hope of profiting alone in the robbery. Now Rodolphe appeared to him as terrible and imposing as justice itself.

The most profound silence reigned without. Nothing could be heard but the rain falling and dripping from the roof on the pavement. Rodolphe addresses the Maître d'Ecole: "Escaped from the galleys of Rochefort, where you were condemned for life for the crimes of forgery, robbery, and murder, you are Anselmo Duresnel!"

"It is false! Let it be proved!" said the Maître d'Ecole, in an altered voice, looking around him with a disturbed air. "How!" cried the Chourineur: "we were not together at Rochefort?" Rodolphe made a sign to the Chourineur to remain quiet, and he continued:

"You are Anselmo Duresnel: you ~~were~~ acknowledged it by-and-by. You have murdered and robbed a cattle-merchant on the route to Poissy?" "It is false!" "You will confess it directly." The brigand looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "This night you have broken into this house to rob: you have stabbed the master of the house."

"You proposed the robbery to me yourself," said the Maître d'Ecole, recovering slightly his assurance; "I was attacked, and I defended myself." "The man you stabbed did not attack you. He was without arms! I proposed this to you, it is true. I will tell you directly for what purpose. The evening previous, after having stolen a pocket-book from a man and woman in 'la cité,' which pocket-book is now before you, you offered to kill me for one thousand francs!" "I heard it," cried the Chourineur. The Maître d'Ecole cast on him a look of savage hatred. Rodolphe continued: "You see, there was no need of your being tempted by me to do evil." "You are not a magistrate, and I will not answer." "Now I will tell you why I proposed this robbery. I knew you had escaped from the galleys. You knew the parents of an unfortunate being, whose misfortunes were caused by your accomplice, La Chouette. I wished to get you here under the pretence of a robbery, the only means by which I could get you to come. Once here, I would have given you your choice, either to be delivered into the hands of justice, who would make you pay with the loss of your head for the murder of the cattle-merchant—" "It is false! I am not the man." "Or to be conducted out of France, by my cares, to a place of perpetual seclusion; but on the condition that you give me the information I required. You have been condemned for life—

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you have escaped from prison. By taking you, by preventing in future the possibility of your doing harm, I would serve the world at large, and by your confessions I should find the means, perhaps, to restore to her family a poor creature, more unfortunate than culpable. Such was at first my project. It was not legal; but, by your escape and your new crimes, you are without the law. Yesterday, a providential revelation taught me your true name." "It is false! my name is not Duresnel!"

Rodolphe took from the table the chain of La Chouette, and showing to the Maître d'Ecole the little "Saint Esprit" of lapis lazuli, "Sacrilege," said he. "You have given to a miserable, infamous creature, this holy relic! three times holy—for your child had this pious gift from his mother and grandmother!" The Maître d'Ecole, stupified with this discovery, hung his head without answering. "Yesterday I learned that fifteen years since you took your son from his mother, and that you alone possess the secret of his existence. This new crime was another motive for me to entrap you, without speaking of what is personal. It is not that which I revenge. This night you have again spilled blood without any provocation. The man whom you have assassinated came to you with confidence, not suspecting your murderous intent. He asked you what you wanted. 'Your money and your life!' and you struck him with your poniard." "Such was the story of M. Murphy when I came to his assistance," said the doctor. "It is false! He lied!" "Monsieur Murphy never lies," said Rodolphe, coldly. "Your crimes demand an extraordinary reparation. You have broken into this garden with arms in your hands. You have stabbed a man, in order to steal. You have committed another murder. You must die here. In compassion to your wife and son, I will save you the shame of the scaffold. It will be supposed that you have fallen in your murderous attempt. Prepare yourself; the arms are charged."

The countenance of Rodolphe was implacable. The Maître d'Ecole had remarked in the adjoining apartment two armed men with carbines. His name was known, and he thought, in effect, that he was about to die, so that his family should be saved from this new shame. Like his fellow, this man was as cowardly as he was ferocious. Believing his last hour was come, he shook convulsively; his lips became blanched; with a suffocating voice, he cried, "Pardon!" "There is no pardon for you," said Rodolphe. "If your brains are not blown out here, the scaffold awaits you." "I prefer the scaffold. I can live two or three months more. What difference can it make to you if I shall be punished a little later? Mercy! Mercy!" "But your wife—your son—they bear your name!" "My name is already dishonoured. Oh! if I could only live eight days! Mercy!" "Not even that contempt of life, which is often found among great criminals!" said Rodolphe, with disgust.

"Besides, the law forbids any to take it in their own hands," continued the Maître d'Ecole, with assurance. "The law!" cried Rodolphe; "the law! You dare to invoke the law; you, who for twenty years have lived in open violation of all law!" The brigand cast down his head without replying, and then said, in a tone much

more humble, "Then for pity! pity! let me live!" "Will you tell me where your son is?" "Yes, yes! I'll tell you all I know about him." "Will you tell me who are the relations of this young girl, who, in her childhood, was so tortured by La Chouette?" "There are papers in my portfolio that can give you some information. It seems that her mother is a great lady." "Where is your son?" "You will let me live?" "Confess all first!" "That is, when you know all—" said the Maître d'Ecole, hesitating. "You have killed him!" "I confided him to one of my accomplices, who, when I was arrested, was able to escape." "What has he done with him?" "He has brought him up; he has given him an education, so that he could enter into business—so that he could serve us. But I will not tell you any more, unless you promise not to kill me." "Do you make conditions, miserable creature?" "Well! No, no! but pity! have me arrested only for the crime of to-day; do not speak of the others! Leave me a chance to save my head!" "You wish, then, to live?" "Oh yes, yes; who knows? No one can say what may happen," said the brigand, involuntarily. He already thought of a new flight, a new escape. "You wish, then, to live at any price—to live!"

"But to live, even if in chains! One month—for eight days—oh! not to die at once!" "Confess all your crimes, and you shall live." "I shall live! oh truly, I shall live!"

"Listen: in pity to your wife, your child, I wish to give you sage advice. Die to-day! die!" "Oh no, no, no! do not take back your promise! Let me live! Life the most frightful, the most hideous, anything but death!" "You wish it?" "Oh, yes, yes!" "And your son—what have you done with him?" "This friend of whom I have spoken had him taught book-keeping, so as to get him a situation in a bank, in order that he might keep us advised—of certain matters. This was agreed between us. Although at Rochefort, and, always thinking about my escape, I directed all the plans; we corresponded in cipher."

"This man frightens me," cried Rodolphe, shuddering; "he knows crimes I never suspected. Acknowledge: why did you wish to place your son at a banker's?" "For you understand—being in concert with ~~me~~ ^{him} to inspire confidence in the banks—to ~~kill us~~ ^{kill him}—and—" "Oh! mon Dieu! her son; her son?" cried Rodolphe, concealing his face in his hands.

"But we didn't intend any ~~for~~ ^{for}!" cried the brigand; "and besides, when it was revealed to my son what was expected, he refused. After a violent scene with the person who had brought him up, he disappeared. It is more than eighteen months since. We do not know what has become of him. You will see there, in my portfolio, how he has been sought after, for fear we should be denounced; but all traces of him have been lost in Paris. The last house he dwelt in was in the Rue du Temple, No. 14, under the name of François Germain; the address is also in my portfolio. You see, I have told all. Keep your promise! have me arrested only for the business of to-night!" "And the cattle-merchant of Poissy?" "It is impossible that can be discovered, there are no proofs. I can acknowledge it before you, to show my

good-will; but before the judge I will deny it." "You avow it, then!" "I was in great distress; I did not know how to live. La Chouette was my counsellor. Now I repent, you see, since I acknowledge it. Ah! if you were only generous enough not to deliver me to justice, I would give you my word of honour not to begin again!" "You shall live, and I will not deliver you to justice." "You pardon me!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, not believing what he heard; "you pardon me?" "I judge you, and I punish you!" cried Rodolphe, in a voice of thunder. "I will not deliver you to justice, because you will go to the scaffold or the galleys; that must not be; no, it must not be. To the galleys! to rule again by your strength and by your villainy! to satisfy again your brutal instincts of oppression! to be abhorred, feared by all; for crime has its pride, and you rejoiced in your monstrosity. To the galleys! no, no; your iron body defies the labour of the yard and the rod of the sergeant. And, besides, chains can be broken, walls pulled down, ramparts scaled; and, some day, you will again escape, to cast yourself anew on society, like a savage wild beast, marking your way with rapine and murder; for nothing can resist your Herculean strength, nothing is out of reach of your knife; that must not be—no, it must not! since, at the galleys, you would break your chain. To secure one from your madness, what must be done? deliver you to the executioner?" "But is it my death, then, that you wish?" cried the brigand; "is it my death?"

"Death! don't hope for it; you are so cowardly! you fear it so much, that you could never believe it imminent! In your desire to live, in your obstinate hopes, you would escape the agonies of its formidable approach! Foolish, senseless hope! But it is of no consequence; it will veil the expiatory honours of the punishment; you will never believe, until you are under the hands of the executioner! And then, stupified with terror, you will be but a senseless mass of mortality, an offering to the manes of your victims. This cannot be—you would believe you would be saved until the last moment. You, monster—hope! How! you dare to think that hope can shed its balmy influences over you! Oh! it is too much! even old Satan would laugh. I do not mean you to hope any more in this life—I—"

"But what have I done to this man! who is he? what does he wish with me! where am I?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, almost in a state of delirium.

Rodolphe continued: "If, on the contrary, you had braved death, even then you ought not to be delivered to justice. For you, the scaffold would only be a bloody stage, where, like many others, you would make a parade of your ferocity; or, tired of your miserable life, you would damn your soul with a final blasphemy! That must not be, neither. It is not good for the people to see the condemned jest with the executioner, bully the hangman, blow out the divine spark which God has placed within us, with scorn and contempt. There is something holy in the welfare of a soul. Every crime can be expiated and forgiven, says the Saviour, but only to those who have sincerely repented. From the tribunal to the scaffold—the

distance is too short. You must not die thus." The Maître d'Ecole was horror-struck. For the first time in his life he found there was something to be feared worse than death. This vague fear was horrible.

The black doctor and the Chourineur looked at Rodolphe with anguish; they listened with shuddering to his voice, deep, harrowing, merciless cutting like a sword. Rodolphe continued: "Anselmo Duresnel, you, then, shall not go to the galleys; you shall not die." "But what do you want with me? it is hell that sends you here!"

"Listen," said Rodolphe, rising, in a solemn manner: "you have criminally abused your strength; I will paralyse it. The strongest have trembled before you—you shall tremble before the most weak. Assassin! you have plunged the creatures of God into eternal darkness—the shadows of eternity shall commence for you in this life, to-night—directly—your punishment at length will equal your crimes—this frightful punishment will leave you at the horizon of expiation, without end. I should be as criminal as you are, if, in punishing you, I only satisfied a vengeance, however just it might be. Far from being barren like death, your chastisement ought to produce good fruit; far from damning you; perhaps it will reform you. If, to put you in a condition where you can do no harm, I shut you out forever from the splendours of creation; if I plunge you into an impenetrable night alone, with the remembrance of your misdeeds, it is that you may meditate incessantly on their enormities. Yes! forever isolated from the exterior world, you will be forced always to look within yourself; and then, I hope that your forehead, bronzed by infamy, will blush with shame; your heart hardened by ferocity, corroded by crime, will be softened by commiseration. Each one of your words is blasphemous; each one will become a prayer. You are bold and cruel, because you are strong; you shall be lowly and humble, because you shall be weak. You are a stranger to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. You have degraded the understanding that God has placed within you; you have reduced it to thoughts of rapine and murder; from a man you have made yourself a wild beast; some day your understanding will be chastened by remorse, and raised by expiation. You have not even respected that which is respected by the wild beasts, their females and their young. After a long life, consecrated to the redemption of your crimes, your last prayer will be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-for happiness to die between your wife and your son." As he pronounced these last words, Rodolphe was visibly affected.

The Maître d'Ecole felt hardly any more fear; he thought that Rodolphe was only alarming him by this lecture on morality. Almost reassured by the soft voice of his judge, the brigand, now the more insolent, as he was less alarmed, said, with a coarse laugh, "Ah! are we playing at charades? or are we at catechism here?" The black looked at Rodolphe with inquietude; he expected an explosion of anger on his part. But it was not so. The young man hung his head, with an ineffable expression of sorrow,

and said to the doctor, "Do it, David. May God punish me alone, if I am deceived!" and he concealed his face in his hands.

At these words, "Do it," the negro rang the bell. Two men, clothed in black, entered. With a sign, the doctor showed them the door of a side cabinet. The two men rolled the chair on which the brigand was tied into this room. "Tie his head to the back of the chair with a handkerchief, and place another one over his mouth," said the black doctor, without entering the apartment. "You are going to strangle me now?" cried the Maître d'Ecole: "pardon! and—" Then nothing was heard but a confused murmur. The two men reappeared, and, at a sign from the black, retired. "My lord!" said the doctor once more to Rodolphe, in an interrogative manner: "Do it," answered Rodolphe, without changing his position. David entered slowly into the cabinet. "Monsieur Rodolphe, I am afraid," said the Chourineur, pale and trembling. "Monsieur Rodolphe, speak to me, then, I am afraid; is it a dream? What is he going to do to the Maître d'Ecole, the negro? Monsieur Rodolphe, I hear nothing—it makes me still more afraid—"

David came out of the cabinet; he was pale as negroes are; his lips were white. He again rang; the two men came in. "Bring back the chair!" It was done. "Take off the bandage!" It was taken off. "You mean, then, to put me to the rack?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with a tone of anger rather than grief. "Why did you amuse yourself by pricking my eyes thus? You hurt me; is it to torment me again that you have put all the lights out here, as within?" There was a moment of frightful silence. "You are blind," said David, in a mournful tone.

"It is not true; it is not possible! You have made it dark expressly," cried the brigand, making violent efforts to release himself. "Take off his bonds; let him rise, let him walk," said Rodolphe. It was done; he raised himself quickly, made one step with his hands before him, then fell back in the chair, lifting his arms to heaven.

"David, give him this port folio," said Rodolphe.

The negro put in his trembling hands a pocket-book.

"There is in this pocket-book a sum sufficient to secure you an asylum and bread to the end of your days in some solitude. Now you are free; go and repent; the Lord is merciful!" "Blind!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, holding mechanically the portfolio in his hand. "Open the doors, let him go!" said Rodolphe. The doors were opened with a loud crash.

"Blind! blind! blind!" repeated the horror-stricken bandit. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! it is, then, true!"

"You are free—you have money—go!"

"But I can't go—I—what do you wish me to do? I can't see!" cried he in a voice of despair. "But it is a frightful crime to take advantage of one's strength, for—"

"It is a crime, is it?" repeated Rodolphe, in a solemn tone. "And you, what have you done with your strength?" "Oh death! Yes, I should have preferred death!" cried the Maître d'Ecole. "To be at the mercy of the world; to fear every one; a child could beat me now;

what can I do! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! What can I do?" "You have money." "They will steal it from me!" said the brigand.

"They will rob you! Do you hear these words—you say it with fear—you who are a robber? go, go." "For the love of God," said the Maître d'Ecole, in a supplicating manner, "let some one conduct me! How can I go into the streets! Ah! kill me! I ask you, for pity's sake, kill me!" "No, one day you will repent." "Never, never! I will never repent! Oh! I will revenge myself! I will revenge myself!" and grinding his teeth with rage, he jumped out of the chair with clinched fists and a menacing air; and the first step he stumbled and fell. "No, no, I cannot; and yet I am so strong. Ah! I am much to be pitied; no one will pity me; no one!" And he wept.

It is impossible to paint the stupor and affliction of the Chourineur during this terrible scene: his rude and rough features expressed compassion; he approached Rodolphe, and said in a low voice, "Monsieur Rodolphe, he has perhaps received what he deserved, for he was a famous villain! He wanted to kill me just now; but never mind; now he is blind, he weeps. Thunder! it makes me feel bad. He can't see to walk—he may be crushed in the streets. Will you let me conduct him to some place where he can be quiet, at least?" "Good," said Rodolphe, touched with this generosity, and taking his hand; "good; go!" The Chourineur approached the Maître d'Ecole, and placed his hand on his shoulder. The brigand trembled. "Who touched me?" said he, in a mournful tone. "I—" "Who are you?" "The Chourineur." "You come to revenge yourself, also?" "You cannot see how to go out? take my arm—I will conduct you." "You—you?" "Yes; now, come!" "You wish to spread a snare for me?" "You know I am not a scoundrel—that I will not take advantage of your misfortune. Come; let us go—it is daylight." "Daylight! Ah! I shall never see daylight again. I—never—" Rodolphe could no longer support the scene; he went in, followed by David, making signs to the servants to retire. The Chourineur and the Maître d'Ecole remained alone. "Is it true that there is money in the portfolio he gave me?" asked the brigand, after a long silence. "Yes. I put there myself five thousand francs: with that you can go and board somewhere—in some corner of the country, for the rest of your days; or would you rather go to the Ogresse?" "No! she would rob me." "To Bras-Rouge?" "He would poison me, to steal my money!" "Where, then, shall I take you?" "I don't know. You are not a robber, Chourineur. Here, conceal my portfolio in my vest, so that 'La Chouette' can't see it; she would soon empty it." "La Chouette! they have carried her to the hospital of Beaujou. In struggling with you last night, I have broken one of her legs." "But what is to become of me! Mon Dieu! what is to become of me! With this black curtain always before me! and if on this black curtain I should see appear the pale faces and the dead who—"

He shuddered, and said to the Chourineur, "This man—of last night, is he dead?" "No." "So much the better;" and after remaining

for some moments silent, he cried, with a new access of rage,

"It is you, Chourineur, who has caused all this! Brigand! if it had not been for you, I should have killed the man, and carried off the money. If I am blind, it is your fault—yes, it is your fault!"

"Don't think any more about that—it does you no good: will you come or not? I am tired—I want to sleep—I have had holiday enough now. To-morrow I shall return to my work—I will take you where you wish to go; afterward I will go to bed."

"But I don't know where to go—to my lodgings! I dare not—it must be said—"

"Well, listen. Will you come for a day or two to my lodgings? I will look out for some kind folks, who, not knowing who you are, will take you for a boarder, as an unfortunate blind man. Stop—there is a man I know at the Port St. Nicholas, whose mother lives at Saint Mandé; a worthy woman, who is poor; perhaps—she will take care of you. Come, now—yes or no?" "I believe I can rely on you, Chourineur. I am not afraid to go with you—with my money. You have never stolen—you are not a bad man—you are generous." "Come, that is good—no more epitaphs—enough." "I am only grateful for what you wish to do for me, Chourineur. You are without hatred, and without ill-will," said the brigand with humility; "you are a much better man than I am." "Thunder! I think so. M. Rodolphe said I had a heart." "But who is this man, then—he is not a man!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage; "he is an executioner—a monster!" The Chourineur shrugged his shoulders, and said, "Let us go?" "We shall go to your room, Chourineur!" "Yes." "You have no ill-feeling towards me for this night's work? You swear it, don't you?" "Yes." "And you are sure he is not dead—the man?" "I am sure of it." "That will be at least one the less," said the brigand, in a hollow voice. And leaning on the arm of the Chourineur, he left the house of the *Allée des Veuves*.

CHAPTER XXII.

L'ÎLE ADAM.

A MONTH had passed since the occurrence of the event of which we have spoken. We will now conduct the reader to the little town of L'Île Adam, situated in a delightful position on the banks of the River Oise, near a forest. The smallest facts become events in the country. Thus the idlers of L'Île Adam, who were promenading on the "Place de l'Eglise" one fine morning, were very busy, wondering when the new proprietor of the finest butcher stand in the town, which had been recently purchased from the widow Dumont, would arrive. The new owner must be rich, for he had most splendidly painted and decorated the shop.

For three weeks the workmen had laboured day and night; a fine grating, all bronze and gilt, extended across the entrance to the stall, leaving a free circulation of air when it was closed. On each side of the grating rose large pilasters, surmounted with two bulls' heads with gilded horns; these supported the entablature.

ture destined to receive the sign. The rest of the house, composed of a single story, had been painted stone colour, with blinds or "*persiennes*" of French gray. The works were all terminated, except the placing of the sign, which was most impatiently waited for by the idlers, very desirous of knowing the name of the widow's successor. At length the workmen brought a large board painted black, and in gilded letters could be read, "*Francœur, marchand boucher.*" The curiosity of the good folks was only partially satisfied. Who was this Mr. Francœur? One, who had more curiosity than the rest, went and asked the boy who had charge of the shop, a fine, active, hearty-looking fellow, with broad shoulders, and who was busily occupied in arranging the meats for sale.

However, nothing was to be learned from him, for he answered that he did not know his master yet; the purchase had been made by a third person, but he did not doubt that he would do everything he could to merit the favour of the "*bourgeois*" of L'Île Adam. This little compliment, made in a pleasant manner, joined to the neat appearance of the shop, disposed the idlers much in favour of M. Francœur; many of them even condescended to promise their custom to the butcher's boy.

Two hours after, a neat little basket wagon, quite new, drawn by a fine stout horse, drove into the yard of the house, and two men got out. The one was Murphy, completely cured of his wounds, although rather pale; the other was the Chourineur. At the risk of repeating a vulgarity, we will say that the imposture of dress is so powerful, that the frequenter of the taverns of the "*cité*" was hardly recognisable in the decent dress he now wore. Even his face had undergone the same change; he had thrown off, with his rags, his savage, brutal, and turbulent manner; to have seen him walk with his hands in the pockets of his long and comfortable riding-coat of dark brown cloth, his chin neatly shaved, and buried in a white cravat with embroidered corners, one would have taken him for one of the most harmless and inoffensive "*bourgeois*" in the world.

Murphy fastened the reins of the horse to an iron ring attached to the wall, and entered with his companion into a pretty little room, which was back of the shop, and neatly furnished with simple furniture, made of walnut: the two windows looked out to the yard, where the horse was neighing with impatience. Murphy appeared to be quite at home, for he opened a closet and took out a bottle of brandy, saying to the Chourineur, it was quite cold riding this morning: "Will you take a glass of brandy, my boy?" "If it is all the same to you, Monsieur Murphy, I will not drink." "You refuse a taste?" "Yes; I am too happy—joy that makes one warm; besides, when I say content, perhaps." "How is that?" "Yesterday, when you came to look for me at the Port Saint Nicolas, where I was working hard, to make myself warm—I had not seen you since the night when the negro with white hair had put out the eyes of the Maître d'Ecole. It was no doubt necessary that he should not escape, it is true—but—thunder! that scared me; and M. Rodolphe—what a face! he who had such a good-natured look. He made me really afraid." "Well, well, what then?" "You said to me, 'Good-day, Chourineur'—'Good-day, M. Murphy. So you are well again? so much the better—thunder! so much the better. And M.

Rodolphe?' He was obliged to leave, some days after, the *Alibé des Veuves*, and he forgot you, "*mon garçon.*" "Well, M. Murphy," I answered, 'if M. Rodolphe has forgotten me, true that makes me sorry.' 'I meant to say, my good fellow, that he had forgotten to recompense your services, but that he would always remember.' Thus, Monsieur Murphy, these words made me glad right away. Thunder! I—I shall never forget him! He said to me that I had honour, had a heart—enough, sufficient."

"Unfortunately, my boy, my lord is gone without leaving any orders concerning you; as for myself, I have nothing but what my lord gives me; I cannot acknowledge as I should wish all I owe you on my own account." "Come, come, Monsieur Murphy, you are amusing yourself." "Why the devil did you not return to the *Allée des Veuves*, after that fatal night? My lord would not have gone without thinking about you." "Dame! M. Rodolphe did not ask me—I thought he had not farther need of my services." "But you ought to have thought, at least, that he had need at least to acknowledge his gratitude." "Since you have told me that M. Rodolphe has not forgotten me, Monsieur Murphy—" "Go along—well, we'll talk no more about it—only I had much trouble to find you. Don't you go any more to the Ogresse?" "No." "Why not?" "It is one of my notions—foolishness." "Very good. But now let us return to what you were saying. What was it, Monsieur Murphy? You said, 'I am happy to have met you—and still more happy, perhaps—'" "Ah! I remember. Yesterday you said to me, '*Mon garçon*, I am not rich, but I can find you an easier place than one on the quay, where you can earn four francs a day.' Four francs a day—*Vive la Charte!* I could not believe—pay of a sub-adjutant!! I answered you, 'It suits me, Monsieur Murphy!' 'But,' says you, 'you must not be clothed like a "*guezuz*," for it would frighten the honest folks where I shall take you.' I answer you, 'I have no others.' Then you said, 'Come to the Temple.' I follow you. I chose what I wanted at Mother Hubert; you advanced the money to pay for it, and in a quarter of an hour I am as fine as a proprietor or a dentist. You appointed me to meet you this morning at the 'Porte Saint Denis,' at daylight; I found you there with your wagon, and here we are."

"Well, and what is there to regret in all this?" "It is to be well clad, do you see—that spoils one; and when I shall put on my old clothes, I shall feel bad; and, besides, to earn four francs a day, I who only earned two—and that so sudden—it seemed to me to be too fine, and could not last; and I would much prefer to sleep all my life on the miserable straw bed of my lodgings, than to sleep five or six nights in a good bed. That is my character."

"That is reasonable; but it would be better always to sleep in a good bed. It is clear, better have a belly full of bread than to starve with hunger. Ah! this is a butcher's shop here?" said the Chourineur, hearing the blows of the meat-axe, and seeing through the curtains quarters of beef. "Yes, *mon garçon*, it belongs to one of my friends. While my horse blows, are you a mind to visit it?" "Ma foi, yes; it recalls the days of my youth, only I had Montfaucon for a slaughter-house, and old horses for cattle. It is droll! but if I had money, I do not know any trade that I should have preferred to that of a butcher. To go to the fairs on one's pony to

buy cattle; return home to one's own fireside; to get warm if it should be cold, or to get dry if one is wet; find your wife, a good fat soul, with a host of children, who would rummage your pocket to see if you have brought anything from the fair; and then in the morning in the slaughter-house, take hold of an ox by the horns, especially when he is savage—'*nom de nom*'—he should be savage—draw him down to the ring—knock him over—cut him up—dress him—thunder! that would have been my ambition, like the Goualeuse desired to eat the barley sugar when she was little. Apropos of this young girl, M. Murphy; seeing that she returned no more to the Ogresse, I had no doubt but that M. Rodolphe had kept her away. Now, I call that a good action—poor girl! she did not wish to do wrong—she was so young! and, besides, later—custom—in fine, M. Rodolphe has done well." "I am of your opinion, but will you visit the shop while the horse blows?" The Chourineur and Murphy entered into the shop; from thence they went to the stable, where they found three fine bullocks, and a score of sheep; thence to the slaughter-house, pens, and other outhouses, all of which were in a state of great order and neatness. When they had seen all but the upper story of the dwelling, Murphy said, "You must acknowledge now that my friend is a happy man. This house and shop belongs to him, without counting a thousand dollars ready money for trade: he is about thirty-eight years of age, strong as a bull, iron constitution, and fond of his trade. The good and honest boy that you saw below, fills his place with much intelligence when he goes to buy his cattle at the fair. Once more, is not my friend a very happy man?" "Ah! marry, yes, Monsieur Murphy; but what will you have? There are happy and unhappy folks; when I think that I am going to earn four francs a day, and that there are some who earn only the half, if not—" "Will you go up stairs and see the rest of the house?" "Willingly, Monsieur Murphy." Because the *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ you, is up there." "The *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ me?" "Yes." "Stop—why did you not tell me this sooner?"

"I will explain by-and-by." "A moment," said the Chourineur, with an embarrassed and mournful air, catching Murphy by the arm. "Listen, I ought to tell you a thing: that Monsieur Rodolphe has perhaps not told you, but which I ought not to conceal from the *bourgeois*, who wishes to employ me—because, if it disgust him, whether it be now or after—" "What do you mean to say?" "I wish to say—" "Well?" "That I am a *repris de justice*—that I have been to the galleys," said the Chourineur, in a hoarse voice. "Ah!" said Murphy. "But I have never wronged any one," cried the Chourineur; and I would rather starve with hunger than to steal. But I have done worse than steal," added he, casting down his eyes. "I have killed—in anger; and this is not all," said he, after a moment's silence. "The *bourgeois* never like to employ criminals—and they are right. This is the reason which has always prevented my getting any work except on the quays; for I have always said, in asking for work, So and so—and so—do you want me or not? I'd rather be refused than to be discovered afterward. I only mean to tell you that I am going to tell all to the *bourgeois*. You know him; if you think he will refuse me, let me avoid seeing him by

telling me so, and I will turn upon my heels." "Come along," said Murphy. The Chourineur followed Murphy; they mounted the staircase; and on opening a door, they found themselves in the presence of Rodolphe. "My good Murphy," said he, "leave us alone."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RECOMPENSE.

"Vive la Charte! I am delighted to find you once more, Monsieur Rodolphe, or, rather, my lord," cried the Chourineur; and he really experienced great joy, for noble hearts are as much attached by services rendered as received. "Good-day, *mon garçon*; I also am delighted to see you." "That joker of a Mr. Murphy, who said you had gone; but stop, my lord." "Call me Monsieur Rodolphe—I prefer it." "Well! Monsieur Rodolphe, excuse me for not coming to see you since that night. I feel now that I have been impolite; but you did not want me, did you?" "I pardon you," said Rodolphe, smiling; "but has M. Murphy shown you this house?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe—fine house, fine shop; it is substantial, and in good order. Speaking of substantial, it is I who am going to be substantial, Monsieur Rodolphe: four francs a day M. Murphy has got for me—four francs!" "I have better than that to propose to you, *mon garçon*." "Oh! better, without troubling yourself—it is difficult—four francs a day!" "I have a better proposition, I tell you; for this house, and all that it contains, this shop, and the thousand dollars that you see in this portfolio, all belongs to you." The Chourineur smiled in a simple manner, crushed his beaver hat between his knees, and did not seem to comprehend what Rodolphe had said, although his language was very plain and clear. The latter continued, with much kindness, "I imagine your surprise, but I repeat, this house and this money are all yours—your property." The face of the Chourineur became very much flushed; he passed his iron hand over his face, dripping with perspiration, and muttered, with a faltering voice, "Oh! that is to say—that is to say—my property." "Yes, your property, since I give it to you. Do you understand? I give it to you—to you."

The Chourineur shook on his chair, scratched his head, coughed, cast down his eyes, but said not a word. He felt the current of his ideas escape him: he understood perfectly what Rodolphe had said to him, and it was just on that account that he could not believe what he heard. Between the profound misery, the degradation in which he had always lived, and the position which Rodolphe assured him, there was an abyss, which the service he had rendered to Rodolphe did not seem to merit. Not wishing to hurry the moment, when his protégé would at length open his eyes to the reality, Rodolphe enjoyed with delight this stupor, this incredibility of delight. He saw, with a mixture of joy and bitterness unutterable, that among a certain class the habit of suffering and ill-fortune is such, that their reason refuses to admit the possibility of a future, which for a great number would be very little to be desired. After having for a while enjoyed the stupid surprise of the Chourineur, Rodolphe continued, "What I give you, then, seems beyond your

wishes?" "My lord," said the Chourineur, rising suddenly, "you propose this house, and this money, to try me; but I cannot—" "You cannot what?" said Rodolphe, in astonishment. The face of the Chourineur brightened up, his bashfulness passed away; he said, with a firm voice, "It is not to engage me to steal that you offer me so much money, I know that well. Besides, I never have stolen in my life—it is perhaps to kill some one," added he, in a mournful tone. "Ah! the unfortunate!" cried Rodolphe, with bitterness. "Compassion to them is so rarely met with, that they can only explain liberality by crime!" Then addressing the Chourineur, he said, in a tone of great kindness, "You judge me wrongfully—you deceive yourself. I require nothing from you but what is honourable. That which I give you, I give because you have deserved it." "I!" cried the Chourineur, whose wonderings began again; "I deserve it: and how?"

"I am going to tell you. Without distinct ideas of good and evil—abandoned to your natural instincts, shut up in the gaols, for fifteen years, with the most frightful villains—pressed by misery, by hunger—forced by your disgrace, and by the reprobation of honest people, to continue to frequent the resort of malefactors—not only have you remained honest, but the remorse for your crime has survived the expiation which human justice had imposed." This simple and noble language was a new source of astonishment for the Chourineur. He looked at Rodolphe with respect, mingled with fear and gratitude. But he could not yet believe the evidence of his senses. "How, Monsieur Rodolphe, because you have beaten me, because believing you to be a workman like myself, since you speak '*Argot*' like papa and mamma, I have related you my life over a mug of wine; and after that I saved you from drowning. You—how?—finally—I—a house—money—I like a '*bourgeois*.' Stop, Monsieur Rodolphe; once more, it is not possible."

"Believing me one of your fellows, you related to me your story as it was, without any deceit or concealment, what was culpable—what was praiseworthy. I have judged you—well judged—and it pleases me to reward you."

"But, Monsieur Rodolphe, it cannot be. No, for there are poor workmen who have been honest all their lives, and who—" "I know it, and perhaps, I have done for many of them more than I do for you. But if the man who lives honest in the midst of honest people, encouraged by their esteem, merits interest and assistance; he who, notwithstanding he is separated from all decent people, remains honest in the society of the most miserable scoundrels upon earth, he also merits interest and assistance. Besides, this is not all; you have saved my life—you have also saved that of my dearest friend. That which I do for you, then, is as much dictated by personal gratitude, as the desire to drag from mire a noble and strong mind, which is only sullied, not lost. And this is not all—" "What have I done, then, besides, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

Rodolphe took him cordially by the hand, and said, "Filled with commiseration for a man who had wished to kill you, you offered him your assistance; you have even given him an asylum in your dwelling, '*impasse Notre Dame, No. 9*.'"

"Do you know where I live, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Because you forget the services you have rendered me, must I forget them? When you left my house, you were watched, and were seen entering your house with the *Maitre d'Ecole*."

"But M. Murphy told me that you did not know where I lived, Monsieur Rodolphe." "I wished to prove you once more—I wished to know if your generosity was disinterested. In effect, after your courageous action, you returned to your rude labours of the day, asking nothing, hoping nothing; not even a bitter word against the apparent ingratitude with which I despised your services; and when Murphy, yesterday, proposed an occupation by which you would be better remunerated than by your habitual work, you accepted with joy, with gratitude!" "Listen now, Monsieur Rodolphe, about that; four francs a day are always four francs a day; as to the service I have rendered you, it is rather I who should thank." "How is that?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur Rodolphe," added he, with a melancholy voice. "I have already received something; for since I have known you, and you said these words, '*You have got a heart and honour*,' it is astonishing how much I have reflected. It is really droll that two words, two single words, could produce that. But, in fact, if you sow two little grains in the ground, from almost nothing springs up the large stalk of corn." This just and almost poetical comparison struck Rodolphe. And truly, two words, but two words, magical and powerful for those who comprehend them, had almost suddenly developed in this energetic mind instincts good and generous, which had only existed in the germe.

"Do you see, my lord," continued the Chourineur, "I have saved Monsieur Rodolphe and M. Murphy a little, it is true; but if I should save hundreds and thousands, that would not render life to those who—"

"This remorse is salutary, but a good action is always counted," said Rodolphe; and then, willing to change the discourse, he said, "You have placed the *Maitre d'Ecole* at St. Mandé?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. He got me to change his bills for gold, and to buy a belt, which I fastened around him. We put his change in this—and good-by! He has board for thirty sous a day, with some worthy, good people, to whom this small sum is of use." "You must do one more service for me mon, garçon?"

"Speak, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"In a few days you will go and see him, with this paper: it is the title for a perpetual place among the '*Bons Pauvres*.' He will give four thousand five hundred francs, and he will be admitted for life, on the presentation of this paper, it is all agreed upon, all arranged. I have thought that this would be best. It will assure him food and shelter for the remainder of his days, and he will only have to think of repentance. I regret now that I did not give him this entrance at once, instead of money, which may be squandered or stolen; but he inspired me with such horror, that I only thought of getting rid of his presence. You will make him this offer, and you will conduct him to the hospital. If, by chance, he should refuse, we will decide how to act differently. So it is agreed, then, you will go and see him." "It will be with much pleasure, Monsieur Rodolphe, that I would render you this service, but I don't know if I shall be free."

M. Murphy has engaged me with a 'bourgeois,' at four francs a day." Rodolphe looked at the Chourineur with astonishment. "How! and your house? and your shop?"

"Come, Monsieur Rodolphe, don't make fun of a poor devil. You have amused yourself enough, to prove me, as you said. Your house, and your shop, it is a song of the same tune. You said to yourself, now let me see if this animal of a Chourineur will be enough of a turkey-cock to imagine that—enough—enough, Monsieur Rodolphe. You are a joker—do stop!" "How? Did I not explain all this to you just now?" "To give a colour to the thing, yes; and, 'toi l'homme,' I did bite. Did you ever see such a fool?" "But, mon garçon, you are crazy!" "No, no, my lord. Stop, speak to me about M. Murphy. Although it is astonishing, yet four francs a day—I can imagine it; but a house, a shop, money—what a farce! Thunder, what a farce!" and he laughed long and loud. "But, once more—"

"Listen, my lord; frankly, at first, you have a little deceived me. I said to myself, M. Rodolphe is a gay boy, not many like him; he has, perhaps, some message to send to the devil; he is going to give me the commission, and he wishes to grease my paws, so that I won't be afraid of the fire. But afterward I reflected that I was wrong to think so of you; and then I thought you were willing just to get up a little farce, for a laugh; for if I was *Job* enough to believe that you were going to give me a fortune for nothing, then you would have said, Poor Chourineur, go, you wrong me—are you sick?" Rodolphe began to find it rather embarrassing to convince the Chourineur. He said to him in a grave and imposing manner, almost severe, "I never jest with the gratitude and interest inspired by noble conduct. I have told you this house and this money are yours; it is I who gives them to you; and since you hesitate to believe me, since you force me to take an oath, I swear on my honour, all this belongs to you, and that I give it to you for the reasons I have stated." At this firm and dignified manner, and at the serious expression of Rodolphe, the Chourineur could no longer doubt the truth. During some moments, he looked at him in silence, and then, without emphasis, with a voice profoundly moved, he said, "I believe you, my lord, and I thank you: a poor man like me knows not how to make speeches. Once more, I thank you: all I can say to you is, that I never will refuse succour to the unfortunate; because it is poverty and hunger, the Ogresse, and people of that kind, who have deceived the poor Gonaleuse; and, once in the sink, all the world has not arm strong enough to pull them out." "You cannot thank me in a better way, mon garçon; you understand me. You will find in this secretary the titles of this property, acquired for you under the name of M. Francœur."

"M. Francœur?" "You have no name. I give you this one. It is of good omen. You will honour it, I am sure." "My lord, I promise you." "Courage, mon garçon! You can aid me in a great and good undertaking." "I, my lord!" "You; in the eyes of the world you shall be a living and salutary example. The happy position in which Providence has placed you will prove that those who have fallen very low can yet be raised, and hope much, when they repent, and still preserve pure some striking qualifications. In seeing you happy, because after

committing a criminal action, expiated by a terrible punishment, you have preserved your honour, courage, and disinterestedness, those who would have given up, will try to become better. I wish no one to be ignorant of your past life. Sooner or later it will be known; better anticipate a revelation. I will shortly go to the mayor of this district with you. I have inquired about him, and find he is a man worthy to concur in my work. I will tell him who I am, and I will be your security; and to establish from the present honourable relations between you and the two persons who morally represent the society of this town, I will secure a sum of two thousand francs for the poor, to be paid monthly for two years; every month I will send you the sum, of which the use shall be regulated by you, the mayor, and the *curé*. If either of them should feel the smallest scruples in co-operating with you, this must disappear before the exigencies of charity. These relations once well assured, it will depend upon yourself to merit the esteem of these worthy people, and you will not fail." "My lord, I comprehend you. It is not to me, the Chourineur, to whom you do all this good; it is to those unfortunates who, like me, have found themselves in trouble, in crime, and who have come out of it, as you say, with *heart and honour*. It is like in the army: when all the soldiers of a battalion distinguish themselves, they cannot all be rewarded with the decoration (legion of honour); there are only four crosses for five hundred brave fellows; but those who do not get the star say, 'Good—I'll get it another time,' and the other time they rush still more fearlessly into danger." Rodolphe listened to his protégé with much happiness. In rendering to this man his own, his self-esteem—in raising him in his own estimation—in giving him, as we may say, a consciousness of his own integrity, he had almost instantaneously developed in his heart and mind reflections filled with good sense, sentiment, honour; almost, we may say, delicacy.

"That which you say to me, Francœur," answered Rodolphe, "is a new manner to prove your gratitude. I take it kindly."

"So much the better, my lord, for I should be much embarrassed to prove the contrary." "Now let us go and visit your house; my old Murphy has had this pleasure; I wish to have it, also."

Rodolphe and the Chourineur descended. At the moment they entered the court, the "*garçon*," addressing the Chourineur, said to him, respectfully, "Since you are the '*bourgeois*,' Monsieur Francœur, I come to let you know that business is brisk. There are no more cutlets nor legs of mutton left; we must kill a sheep or two at once." "Parbleu!" said Rodolphe to the Chourineur, "here is a fine occasion to exercise your talent. I want to have the first use of it; the fresh air has given me an appetite, and I will taste one of your cutlets, although rather too fresh, I fear." "You are very good, Monsieur Rodolphe," said the Chourineur, with a joyous air; "you flatter me, but I will do my best." "Shall I take two sheep to the slaughter-house, bourgeois?" said the garçon. "Yes, and bring a sharp knife, not too pointed, and with a strong back." "I have just what you want, bourgeois; don't be uneasy—you could shave with it—look here." "Thunder! Monsieur Rodolphe!" said the Chourineur, taking off his coat quickly, and turning up the sleeves of his shirt. "This reminds me of my youth and the '*abattoir*.' You shall see how I'll cut. '*Nom de nom*.' I wish I

was there at once! Your knife, boy—your knife—that is it—you understand—there's a blade! Who wants to have it? Thunder! with a knife like that I would fight a mad bull."

The Chourineur brandished the knife; his eyes began to be filled with blood; his evil passions began to predominate; his instinct, his sanguinary appetite, reappeared with all its fearful energy. The slaughter-house was in the court; it was a vaulted, dark room, paved with stone, and lighted from above by a small opening. The garçon brought one of the sheep to the door. "Shall I fasten him to the ring, bourgeois?"

"Fasten him—thunder! and my knees! Be easy—I will hold it there like a vice. Give me the beast, and go back to the shop." Rodolphe remained alone with the Chourineur; he watched him with attention, almost with anguish. "Come, to work," said he to him. "And it shan't be long—thunder! you will see how I'll manage the knife. My hands burn. There's a humming in my ears. My temples throb, as they always do, when I see red. Come, advance, you—eh! Madelon, that I may stab you to death." With eyes glittering with ferocity, no longer conscious of the presence of Rodolphe, he raised the animal without any effort, and with a bound he carried it into the slaughter-house, with savage and ferocious joy. He looked like a wolf rushing into his den with his prey. Rodolphe followed him, and leaned against one of the boards of the door, which was closed.

The slaughter-house was dark; a bright ray of sunshine fell from above, and lightened up "*à la Rembrandt*" the hard face of the Chourineur—his pale blond hair, and his red whiskers. Bent almost double, holding by his teeth a long knife which shone in the "*clair-obscur*," he drew the sheep between his knees. When he had secured it, he took it by the head, drew the knife across the throat, and killed it. At the moment that the animal felt the blade, it uttered a low, plaintive cry, turning its dying look towards the Chourineur, and two sprits of blood sprinkled him in the face. This cry, this look, this blood, caused a frightful impression on this man. His knife fell from his hands; his face became livid, contracted, frightful, from the blood which covered it; his eyes became staring, his hair bristled on his head, and falling back suddenly with horror, he cried, with a suffocating voice, "Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

Rodolphe ran to him. "Recover yourself, my garçon."

"There—there—the sergeant!" repeated the Chourineur, still retreating, his eye fixed, haggard, and pointing with one finger to some invisible phantom. Then uttering a heart-rending cry, as if the spectre had touched him, he rushed to the end of the slaughter-house, to the darkest corner, and there, striking his face, arms, breast, against the wall, as if endeavouring to throw it down, that he might escape the horrible vision, he again repeated, in a hoarse and convulsive voice,

"Oh! the sergeant! the sergeant! the sergeant!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DEPARTURE.

THANKS to the care and agitation of Murphy and Rodolphe, who soothed his agitation with

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much trouble, the Chourineur came completely to himself after a long crisis.

He found himself alone with Rodolphe, in one of the rooms on the first story. "My lord," said he, with dejection, "you have been very good to me; but you see I would prefer to be a thousand times more unhappy than I have been, than to accept the trade you propose."

"You must reflect, nevertheless."

"Listen, my lord; when I heard the cry of the poor beast, which could not defend itself—when I felt its blood in my face—a warm blood, which seemed to be alive—oh! you do not know what it is—then I saw my dream again—the sergeant—and the poor young soldier that I 'chourined'—who did not defend themselves, and who, in dying, looked at me with an air so mournful, so sad, that they looked as if they pitied me. Oh! my lord! it is enough to drive one mad!" And the unfortunate man buried his face in his hands, convulsively.

"Come, come, calm yourself."

"Excuse me, my lord; but I feel now that the sight of blood—of a knife—I cannot support it. At each moment it would awaken dreams that I had begun to forget. To have every day your hands or feet in blood—cutting the throats of the poor beasts, who cannot defend themselves—oh, no! no, I cannot. I would rather be blind like the Maître d'Ecole, than to follow this business." It is impossible to paint the energy of gesture, of accent, of expression, as the Chourineur thus spoke. Rodolphe felt profoundly grieved. He was satisfied at the horrible impression the sight of blood had caused his protégé. For a moment the bloody instinct, brute nature, had conquered the man; but remorse had conquered the instinct. It was beautiful—it was a great lesson. We must, however, say, to the credit of Rodolphe, he had not despaired of this movement. His will, and not chance, had led him to the scene at the slaughter-house. "Pardon me, my lord," said the Chourineur, timidly: "I make but poor returns for your goodness towards me; but—" "Far from that; you meet all my wishes. And now, I must confess, I was not certain that I should find in you this holy exaltation of remorse." "How, my lord?" "Listen," said Rodolphe: "this is what I have thought. I had chosen for you the occupation of a butcher, because your tastes and instincts were that way." "Alas! my lord, it is true. Without that which you know, it would have been my delight. I said so just now to Mr. Murphy."

"I know it: thus my poor Francœur, so well named, if you had accepted the offer that I made you—and you can yet, without losing my esteem—everything that is here belongs to you. I paid a holy debt. I draw you from a painful situation; I constituted in you a good, and striking, and salutary example, and I should continue to interest myself in you for the future. If, on the contrary, the sight of the blood that you would shed mechanically recalls your crime; if this involuntary sensation proves to me that remorse is always lying dormant in your breast, my views for you are changed; for the situation I offer you becomes a horrible punishment each day."

"Oh! it is too true, Monsieur Rodolphe—a horrible punishment."

"Now this is what I propose: you will accept it, I believe, for I have acted, thinking what would come to pass. A person who possesses a large property in Algiers has ceded to me for you (the deed only has to be signed) a large farm, intended for grazing. The land is very fertile, and under full cultivation; but I will not conceal from you, knowing your courage, and your need of exercising it, I have acquired this property conditionally, although it is situated on the limits of Atlas, that is to say, at the advance posts, and exposed to frequent attacks from the Arabs. It is as necessary for the owner to be as much a soldier as a cultivator; it is at once a redoubt and a farmhouse. The man who takes care of this property during the absence of its owner will give you every information; he is said to be honest and devoted; you will keep him with you as long as it is necessary. Once established there, not only can you increase your substance by labour and intelligence, but you can render true service to your country by your courage. The colonists organize themselves as militia. The extent of your property, the number of tenants subsisting on it, will render you the chief of a troop sufficiently considerable, armed, disciplined, animated by your bravery. It will be of great utility in protecting the scattered population of the plain. I repeat, I have chosen this, notwithstanding the danger, or, rather, on account of the danger, because I wish to make your natural intrepidity of service: because that, in having expiated, almost atoned for a great crime, your complete restoration will be more noble, more entire, more heroic, if it is achieved in the midst of the dangers of an unsubdued country, than if in the midst of the peaceful habits of a small town. If I did not offer this to you at first, it was that it was more than probable that the other would satisfy you; and, besides, this is so much more venturesome, I did not wish to expose you to it without giving you your choice. It is yet time. If you do not like this arrangement, say so frankly; we will look for another; if not, to-morrow all will be signed. I will give you the titles of your property, and you shall go to Algiers with a person recommended by the former owner of the property, to put you in possession. There is the rent of two years now due; this you will receive on your arrival. The farm produces about three thousand francs; work, improve the land, be active, vigilant, and you will easily increase your substance, and those of your tenants, whom you will always be ready to assist; for I cannot doubt, you will always show yourself charitable and generous, and you will remember, that to be rich, is to give much. Although at some distance from you, I shall not forget you; never, never can I forget that I and my best friend owe to you our lives. The only proof of attachment and gratitude I ask is, that you will at once learn to read and write, so you can each week inform me of your welfare, and that you can address yourself directly to me if you have need of advice or assistance."

the Chourineur. His character and natural impulse are so well known to the reader, that it can be well imagined that no proposition could have suited him better.

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The next morning, in effect, the Chourineur departed for Algiers.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

RESEARCHES.

THE house that Rodolphe possessed in the Allée des Veuves was not the place of his ordinary abode. He dwelt in one of the largest hotels of the Faubourg Saint Germain, situated at the end of the Rue Plumet. To avoid the honours due to his sovereign rank, he had guarded his "incognito" since his arrival at Paris. His "chargé d'affaires" near the court of France had announced that his master would return the indispensable official visits under the name and title of the Count de Duren. Thanks to the usage so frequent in the courts of the north, a prince can travel with as much liberty as ease, and escape those ceremonies which from constant repetition become tiresome. Notwithstanding his incognito, Rodolphe lived in great state. We lead the reader into the hotel the morning after the departure of the Chourineur. Ten o'clock had just struck. In the middle of a large room, situated on the ground floor, and opening into the cabinet of Rodolphe, Murphy, seated before a desk, was sealing some despatches. An usher, dressed in black, wearing around his neck a silver chain, opened the folding doors, and announced, "His Excellency the Baron de Graun!" Murphy, without desisting from his occupation, saluted the baron with a gesture at once familiar and cordial. "Monsieur le Chargé d'Affaires," said he, smiling, "will you step to the fire and warm yourself? I will be at your service in a moment." "Sir Walter Murphy, private secretary of his serene highness, I await your orders," answered the baron, gayly, making a profound bow to the worthy knight.

The baron was about fifty years of age. His thin gray hair was slightly frizzed and powdered. His slightly protuberant chin was almost buried in the folds of a large muslin cravat of dazzling whiteness. His expression betrayed tact; his "tournure" distinction; and from the glasses of his golden spectacles peered a look as cunning as it was penetrating. Although so early in the morning, M. de Graun wore a black dress coat—it was according to etiquette—a riband of several colours was tied in the button-hole. He placed his hat on a chair, and walked to the fireplace, while Murphy continued his work. "His highness must have been up all night, my dear Murphy, for your correspondence appears to be very voluminous." "My lord did not retire until six o'clock this morning. He has written, among others, a letter of eight pages to the grand-marshal, and he has dictated one to me, not less in length, to the chief of the Supreme Council." "Shall I await the 'levee' of his highness, to give him the information that I have obtained?"

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It is useless to attempt to describe the joy of

"No, my dear baron. My lord has given orders that he should not be awakened before two or three o'clock. He wishes you to send off these despatches by a special courier this morning, instead of waiting until Monday. You will confide your information to me, and I will communicate it to his highness when he arises; such are his orders."

"Well! his highness will be satisfied, I believe, with what I have to tell him. But, my dear Murphy, I hope the sending of this courier is not of bad augury. The last despatches that I had the honour to transmit to his highness—"

"Announced that all went on well there. And it is because my lord wishes to express, as soon as possible, his satisfaction to the chief of the supreme council and the grand-marshal, that he wishes you to send off this courier to-day."

"I recognise his highness there. If a reprimand had been in agitation, he would not have been in such haste; besides, there is only one opinion of the firm and wise administration of our government 'ad intérim.' It is very simple," added the baron, smiling; "the watch was good, and perfectly regulated by our master; it only required to be kept wound up, so that its sure and invariable action would continue to indicate the employment of each hour, and of every one. Order in a government produces always confidence and tranquillity among the people; this it is which explains to me the good news you give." "And here, nothing new, dear baron! nothing whispered? our mysterious adventures—" "Are completely unknown. Since the arrival of my lord at Paris, they have become so habituated only to see him very rarely among the few persons who were presented to him, they believe he prefers solitude, and that he makes frequent excursions in the environs of Paris. His highness has wisely dispensed, for a time, with the chamberlain and aid-de-camp whom he brought with him from Germany." "And who would have been very inconvenient witnesses for us." "Thus, with the exception of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor, and her brother Tom Seyton, of Halsbury, and Karl, their tool, no one knows of their disguises; now, neither the countess, nor her brother, nor Karl have any interest in betraying this secret." "Ah! my dear baron," said Murphy, sighing, "what a misfortune that this cursed countess is a widow now!"

"Was she not married in 1827 or 1828?"

"In 1827, a little while after the death of that little girl, who would now have been sixteen or seventeen years old; and who my lord weeps for every day, without ever speaking of her."

"Regrets easily to be conceived, as his highness had no children from his marriage."

"Thus, my dear baron, I have thought that, independent of the pity which the poor Goulaeuse inspired, the interest that my lord felt for this unfortunate creature was, above all, created by the thought that this child he so bitterly regrets (as much as he detests the countess her mother) would have been about the same age." "It does appear like a fatality, that this Sarah, from whom we had thought ourselves forever delivered, should just find herself free eighteen months after his highness has lost the model of wives. The countess believes, I am

certain, that she is favoured by fate in this double widowhood." "And her insensate hopes are stronger than ever, notwithstanding she knows that my lord has for her the most profound aversion. Has she not been the cause— Ah, baron," said Murphy, without finishing his phrase, "this woman is a horror. God grant she brings us no more trouble!"

"What can be feared from her, my dear Murphy? Formerly, she had over my lord that influence which a cunning and intriguing woman always has over a young man who loves for the first time, and who, above all, finds himself in the circumstances you know; but this influence has been destroyed by the discovery of the unworthy manoeuvres of this creature, and, above all, by the remembrance of the frightful event she caused."

"Lower, my dear De Graün—lower," said Murphy. "Alas! we are now in this fatal month, and we draw near the date not less fatal, this 13th of January; I always dread for my lord this fatal anniversary." "Yet, if a great fault can be forgiven by expiation, ought not his highness to be absolved?"

"For pity's sake, my dear De Graün, let us talk no more about it. I shall feel sad for the rest of the day."

"I say, then, that at this time the designs of the Countess Sarah are absurd; the death of the poor child broke the last link which could attach my lord to this woman; she is mad if she persists in her hopes." "Yes! but it is a dangerous madness. Her brother, you know, partakes of her ambitious and headstrong imagination; although this worthy couple have now as much reason to despair as they had to hope eighteen years ago."

"Ah! and what trouble has that infernal Abbé Polidore caused in those days by his criminal 'compliance!'"

"Speaking of this wretch, I have been informed that he was here a year or two since, plunged, without doubt, in profound misery, or occupied in some infernal machinations."

"What a fall for a man of so much learning, mind, and intelligence! but also of an abominable perversity! Heaven grant that he may not meet the countess! The union of these two evil spirits would be very dangerous."

"Once more, my dear Murphy, the interest of the countess, however unreasonable her ambition, will always prevent her profiting by the love of adventures of my lord, to try some wicked scheme." "I hope so; yet chance has prevented I do not know what proposition, detestable without doubt, that this woman wished to make to the Maitre d'Ecole—this frightful wretch, who, now no longer in a condition to injure any one, lives unknown, perhaps repentant, among some honest peasants of the village of Saint Mandé. Alas! I feel convinced it was, above all, to avenge me, that my lord, in inflicting a terrible punishment, saw the risk of placing himself in a grave position."

"Grave! No, no, my dear Murphy; for this is the question. An escaped criminal, an acknowledged murderer, introduces himself into your house, and strikes you with his poniard; you can kill him by the legitimate law of self-defence, or send him to the scaffold; in either case he loses his life. Now, instead of killing

him or handing him to the executioner, with a formidable punishment, but merited, you put this monster in a condition to harm no one—who will accuse you? Will justice commence a civil action against you, in favour of such a bandit? Could you be condemned for not having gone as far as the law allowed—for only having deprived him of sight instead of killing him? How! to defend my life, or to revenge a flagrant case of adultery, society recognises my right of life or death on my fellow-creature—a formidable right, without control, without appeal, which constitutes me judge and executioner, and yet I cannot modify at my pleasure the capital punishment which otherwise I could inflict with impunity? and above all—above all, in a case like this of the brigand, of whom we have been speaking, for this is the question—I put aside our position as sovereign prince of the Germanic Confederation. I know, of right, that signifies nothing; but it is a forced privilege; besides, such a process commenced against my lord—how many generous actions would plead for him! Once more: suppose this strange cause should be called before the Tribunal, what do you think would happen?" "My lord has always said he would accept the accusation, and not avail himself of the immunity of his position. But who could noise about these events? You know the unshaken discretion of David and the four Hungarian servants of the house in the Allée des Veuves. The Chourineur, whom my lord has rewarded, has not spoken a word on the subject to any one. Before he left for Africa, he swore to be secret. As to the brigand himself, he knows that to complain himself is to bring his head to the scaffold. Finally, neither his highness, nor you, nor I will speak of it: is it not so?" "My dear Murphy, this secret, although known to a great many, will not be the less kept. At the most, some difficulties alone would be to fear; and yet such noble and grand actions would be brought to light in this strange trial, that such an accusation, I repeat it, would be a triumph for his highness." "You reassure me, completely. But you bring me the information you have obtained with the aid of the letters found on the Maitre d'Ecole, and by the declarations made by La Chouette during her stay at the hospital, which she left a few days since, completely cured. Here are the papers," said the baron, drawing them from his pocket. "They are relative to the researches made concerning the birth of the young girl called La Goualeuse, and on the actual place of residence of François Germaine, son of the Maitre d'Ecole."

"Will you read me these notes, my dear De Graün? I know the intentions of my lord. I will see if the information is sufficient. Are you entirely satisfied with your agent?" "He is an excellent man—full of intelligence, address, and discretion. I am sometimes even obliged to moderate his zeal. For, you know, his highness reserves certain elucidations to himself." "And is he perfectly ignorant of the interest my lord has in all this?" "Absolutely. My diplomatic position serves as an excellent pretext for these investigations. M. Badinot (the name of our man) has many agents and concealed correspondents among all classes

of society; formerly a lawyer, forced to give up practice from an abuse of confidence, he has not lost sight of the position and fortune of his former clients; he knows many secrets, which he boldly boasts of having trafficked for; twice enriched and ruined by business, too well known to attempt new speculations, reduced to live from day to day by a variety of means more or less illicit, he is a sort of Figaro sufficiently difficult to understand; as long as his interest commands, he belongs, body and soul, to him who pays; he has no interest to deceive us; besides, I have him watched, so that we have no reason to mistrust him." "The information he has heretofore brought us was always very exact." "He has probity in his manner; and I assure you, my dear Murphy, that M. Badinot is the very original type of one of those mysterious existences which are only met with and are possible at Paris; he would much amuse his highness, if it was not necessary that he should have no communication with him." "The pay of M. Badinot can be increased if you should think it necessary."

"Five hundred francs a month and expenses—about as much more seems to me to be quite enough: he appears to be satisfied; we will see about it."

"And he feels no shame for his employment?"

"He! on the contrary, he prides himself upon it; he never fails, in bringing me his 'rapports,' to put on a most important air. I dare not say a diplomatic one; for the funny fellow pretends to believe they concern the state, and to wonder at the hidden relations which can exist between the most diverse interests and the destinies of empires. Yes, he has the impudence to say to me sometimes, 'What complications, unknown to the vulgar, in the government of a state! who would say, Monsieur le Baron, that the notes I give you have, without doubt, their part of action in the affairs of Europe.'"

"Ah! rogues seek to deceive themselves with their rogueries; it is always complimentary to honest men. But these notes, my dear baron?" "Here they are, almost entirely digested from the report of M. Badinot." "I listen."

M. de Graün read as follows:

"NOTE RELATIVE TO FLEUR DE MARIE.

"Towards the commencement of the year 1827, a man called Pierre Tournemine, now confined in the galleys of Rochefort for the crime of forgery, proposed to the woman Gervais, called La Chouette, to take charge forever of a little girl, about five or six years of age, for which she was to receive the sum of one thousand francs.

("Alas! my dear baron," said Murphy, interrupting M. de Graün, "1827—that is the same year that my lord heard of the death of the little girl he regretted so bitterly. On this account, and many others, this year was a sad one for our master.")

"The bargain concluded, the child remained for two years with this woman, at the end of which, wishing to escape the bad treatment with which she was overwhelmed, the little girl disappeared; La Chouette had not seen or

heard of her for many years, when she met her about six weeks since in a tavern of the cité. The child became a young girl, bore the surname of La Goualeuse. A few days before this encounter, the above-mentioned Tournemine, who the Maitre d'Ecole had known at the galleys, had sent to Bras-Rouge a detailed letter concerning the child formerly confided to the woman Gervais, called "La Chouette." From this letter, and from the declarations of La Chouette, it results that a Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of a notary called Jacques Ferrand, had, in 1827, charged Tournemine to find a woman who, for the sum of one thousand francs, would consent to take charge of a child of five or six years that some one wishes to abandon, as has been said before. La Chouette accepted the proposition.

"The object of Tournemine in addressing Bras-Rouge was to put him in the way, through some third person, to extort some money from Madame Séraphin, by threatening to noise their adventures, now forgotten, about. Tournemine affirmed that this Madame Séraphin was only the agent of some person unknown. Bras-Rouge had confided this letter to La Chouette, an associate for some time in crime with the Maitre d'Ecole; this explains how the document was found in possession of the brigand, and why, when she met La Goualeuse at the Lapin-Blanc, La Chouette, to torment Fleur de Marie, said to her, 'Your parents are found, but you shall not know them.' The question was to know if this letter contained the truth."

"Information has been obtained of Madame Séraphin, and of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

"They are both alive."

"The notary lives in the 'Rue du Sentier, No. 41'; he passes for being very austere and pious; at least, he attends church punctually; he exercises in his practice an excessive regularity, approaching to harshness; his business is excellent; he lives with a parsimony approaching to avarice; Madame Séraphin still continues his housekeeper."

"M. Jacques Ferrand, who was very poor, has bought his office for three hundred and fifty thousand francs; these funds were furnished him, under a good guarantee, by M. Charles Robert, superior officer of the staff of the National Guard of Paris, a very handsome young man, very much the fashion in a certain circle. He divides with the notary the profits of the office, which is estimated to be about fifty thousand francs; but he has nothing to do with the national affairs, well understood. Some evil-minded people affirm that, in consequence of some fortunate speculations at the 'Change, in concert with M. Charles Robert, the notary is now able to pay back the money borrowed; but the reputation of M. Jacques Ferrand is so well established, that it is generally agreed these reports are horrible calumnies. It appears, then, certain, that Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of this holy man, can furnish precious 'éclaircissements' on the birth of La Goualeuse."

"Truly! dear Baron," said Murphy, "there is some appearance of reality in the declarations of this Tournemine. Perhaps we shall find at the notary's the means of discovering the relations of this unfortunate girl. Now, have you

been able to obtain as much information concerning the son of the Maitre d'Ecole?"

"Perhaps less precise; they are, however, quite satisfactory."

"Truly, your M. Badinot is a treasure."

"You see that this Bras-Rouge is the soul of all these undertakings. M. Badinot, who necessarily has much to do with the police, has already pointed him out to us as the go-between among galley-slaves, when my lord took the first steps towards finding the son of Madame Georges Duresnel, the unfortunate wife of the Maitre d'Ecole."

"Without doubt; and it was in going to look for Bras-Rouge in his den in the cité, Rue aux Fèves, No. 43, that my lord met the Chourineur and La Goualeuse. His highness wished to profit by the occasion to visit these fearful haunts, thinking that perhaps he would find there some unfortunate beings he might drag from the filth. His presentiment did not deceive him; but at the price of what dangers—*mon Dieu!*" "Dangers that you have barely partaken of, my dear Murphy." "Am I not, on this account, *coalman in ordinary* to his Serene Highness?" asked Murphy, laughing. "Rather say intrepid body-guard, my worthy friend. But to speak of your courage and your devotion is but a tautology. I continue my report. Here is the note concerning François Germain, son of Madame Georges and of the Maitre d'Ecole, otherwise called Duresnel."

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING FRANÇOIS GERMAIN.

M. DE GRAUN continued: "About eighteen months since, a young man called François Germain arrived at Paris, from Nantes, where he had been employed in the banking-house of Noël & Co. It results from the acknowledgments of the Maitre d'Ecole, and from several letters found upon him, that the scoundrel to whom he confided his son, in order to pervert him, so he might some day be employed in criminal affairs, unfolded this horrible scheme to the young man, in proposing to him to favour an attempt at robbery and forgery in the banking-house where he was employed. The young man refused this offer with indignation; but not wishing to denounce the man who had brought him up, he wrote an anonymous letter to his patron, advising him of the plot, and left Nantes secretly, to escape from the hands of those who had desired to make him their accomplice."

"These wretches, learning his flight, came to Paris, had an interview with Bras-Rouge, and then commenced a search for the sea of the Maitre d'Ecole, without doubt with evil intentions, since this young man knew their designs. After a long pursuit, they at length discovered his retreat: it was too late; Germain, having some days before met the person who had endeavoured to corrupt him, had changed his abode, suspecting the motive which brought this man to Paris: thus a second time he escaped from his persecutors. However, about six weeks since, these wretches ascertained that he lived in the Rue du Temple, No. 17. One night, in entering his lodgings, he had a

narrow escape from being murdered (this circumstance the *Maitre d'Ecole* had concealed from my lord). Germain, suspecting where this came from, left the Rue du Temple, and up to this time no information can be obtained of his place of abode. The researches were at this point, when the *Maitre d'Ecole* was punished for his crimes. It was at this point also they have been resumed by order of his highness. And here is the result.

"François Germain lived about three months in the house in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, a house otherwise extremely curious from the manners and strange occupations of most of its inhabitants. Germain was very much liked there for his gay, lively, and obliging disposition; although he appeared to live on a very narrow income, he had shown great likeness to an indigent family who lived in the garret of this house. We have not been able to find out the new dwelling-place of François Germain, nor the profession he follows; but it is supposed that he was employed in some office or commercial house, for he went out in the morning and returned towards ten o'clock in the evening. The only person that knows to a certainty where he dwells at present is a locataire of the house in the Rue du Temple; this young girl, who appears intimately connected with Germain, is a very pretty 'grisetle,' called *Mlle. Rigolette*; she occupies the room next to the one where Germain lodged; this room, vacant since his departure, is now to be rented."

"*Rigolette*?" said Murphy, suddenly, who for some moments had appeared as if in deep thought; "*Rigolette*! I know that name!" "How, Sir Walter Murphy!" answered the baron, laughing; "how, most worthy and respectable father of a family, you know a 'grisetle'! How! the name of a *Mlle. Rigolette* is not new to you! Ah! fy! fy!"

"Pardieu! My lord has put me in the way to have such strange acquaintances, that you ought not to be so much surprised, baron; but wait a moment. Yes, now I recollect perfectly: my lord, in relating to me the history of *La Goualeuse*, could not prevent a laugh at this droll name, *Rigolette*; as well as I can remember, she was one of the prison friends of this poor *Fleur de Marie*." "Well at this time, *Mlle. Rigolette* can be of excessive utility. I finish my 'rapport.'"

"There would perhaps be some advantage in hiring the vacant chamber of the Rue du Temple. No instructions have been given to push these investigations farther; but, from some words let drop by the portress, we have every reason to believe, not only will it be possible to find in this house some certain information respecting François Germain, by means of this *Mlle. Rigolette*, but that my lord can witness there manners, customs, occupations, and, above all, misery, of which he suspects not the existence."

CHAPTER III.

THE MARQUIS D'HARVILLE.

"Thus, you see, my dear Murphy," said M. de Graun, on finishing the reading of this report,

which he handed to him, "that it is at the notary Jacques Ferrand's we must seek for the trace of the parents of *La Goualeuse*, and it is from *Mlle. Rigolette* we must ask for the abode of François Germain. It is already a great deal, it seems to me, to know where to seek—what one searches."

"Without doubt, baron; besides, my lord will find, I am sure, an ample harvest in the house of which you speak. This is not all yet; have you informed yourself of that concerning the Marquis d'Harville?" "Yes; and as regards the question of money, the fears of his highness have no foundation. M. Badinot affirms, and I believe him well informed, that the fortune of the marquis has never been more substantial, nor more wisely administered."

"After having in vain sought for the cause of the profound chagrin which appeared to oppress M. d'Harville, my lord thought it was possible that he might be embarrassed in his money affairs: he would then have come to his assistance in that mysterious, delicate way, which, you know, he can manage so well; but since he is mistaken in his conjectures, he will have to renounce his inquiries with so much the more regret, since he loves and esteems him so much." "It is quite plain his highness has never forgotten all that his father owes to the marquis. Do you know, my dear Murphy, that in 1815, at the time of the reorganization of the states of the Germanic Confederation, the father of his highness ran great risks of elimination, on account of his attachment, known and proved, for Napoleon? The deceased Marquis d'Harville rendered, on this occasion, immense services to the father of our master, thanks to the friendship of the Emperor Alexander, a friendship which dated from the time of the emigration of the marquess to Russia, and who, invoked by him, had a powerful influence in the deliberations of this Congress, where the interests of the princes of the Confederation were debated." "And now see, baron, how often noble actions are, as it were, linked together; in '92 the father of the marquis was proscribed; he found in Germany, with the father of my lord, the most generous hospitality; after a sojourn of three years in our court, he set out for Russia, where he merited the attention of the Czar, and with his assistance he is able to be of great use to the prince, who had so kindly received him many years before."

"Was it not 1815, during the sojourn of the old Marquis d'Harville with the then reigning grand-duke, that the friendship of my lord and the young d'Harville commenced?" "Yes; they have preserved the most delightful recollections of these joyous scenes of their youth. This is not all. My lord has such profound respect for the memory of the man who was so useful to his father, that all who belong to the family d'Harville have a claim on his benevolence. Thus, not less on account of her misfortunes and her virtues than this relationship, has Madame Georges been indebted to the kindness of his highness." "Madame Georges! wife of Duresnel! the galley-slave, called the *Maitre d'Ecole*!" cried the baron. "Yes, the mother of this François Germain, whom we seek for, and who, I hope, we shall find." "She is a

relation of M. d'Harville?" "She was a cousin of his mother, and her most intimate friend. The old marquis had for Madame Georges the greatest friendship." "But how could the D'Harville family allow her to marry this monster, my dear Murphy?"

"The father of this unfortunate woman, M. de Lagny, intendant of Languedoc before the Revolution, possessed great wealth; he escaped the proscription. In the few days of quietness which remained after this terrible epoch, he looked about for a husband for his daughter. Duresnel presented himself; he belonged to an excellent parliamentary family; he was rich, but under a hypocritical exterior he concealed the most profligate inclinations; he married Mademoiselle de Lagny. After a short time of dissimulation, the vices of this man soon displayed themselves: dissipated, an immoderate gambler, addicted to intemperance, he rendered his wife miserable. She did not complain, concealed her griefs, and, after the death of her father, retired to an estate, which she improved to divert her mind. Soon their common fortune was swallowed up in play and debauchery; the property whither she had retired was sold. Then she brought her son and joined her relation, the Marchioness d'Harville, whom she loved as a sister. Duresnel, having run through his own property and that of his wife, found himself reduced to expedients; he became a forger, robber, assassin, was condemned for life to the galleys, took his son from his wife, to confide him to one of his confederates. You know the rest."

"But how did my lord find out Madame Duresnel?" "When Duresnel was sent to the galleys, his wife, reduced to the most profound poverty, took the name of Georges." "In this cruel position, why did she not apply to the Marchioness d'Harville, her best friend?" "The marchioness died before the condemnation of Duresnel, and since, from an invincible shame, never has Madame Georges presented herself to her family, who certainly would have had for her that regard her misfortunes merited. However, once reduced to the most absolute misery by sickness, she resolved to implore assistance from M. d'Harville, the son of her dearest friend. It was thus that my lord met her." "How then?"

"One day he was going to see M. d'Harville; a few steps before him walked a poor woman, wretchedly clothed, pale, suffering, and cast down. Arrived at the door of the Hôtel d'Harville, at the moment she was about to knock, after a long hesitation, she turned quickly around, as if her courage failed her. Very much surprised, my lord followed this woman, very much interested with her modest and sorrowful manner. She entered into a lodging of a very humble appearance. My lord made some inquiries concerning her, and found that she sewed for her living, but that work and health were both wanting, and that she was reduced to a state of abject misery. The next day I went to the house with my lord. We arrived in time to prevent her dying with hunger. After a long illness, in which every care and attention was paid her, she related the story of her life to his highness, of whose rank she was entirely ignorant." "And thus it was he became acquainted with the fact that Madame Georges

belonged to the family D'Harville?" "Yes; and after this explication, my lord, who appreciated more and more the excellent qualities of Madame Georges, made her leave Paris, and established her at the farm of Bouqueval, where she is at present with La Goualeuse. She has found in this quiet retreat, if not happiness, at least tranquillity, and in overseeing the farm, she can chase away her sorrows." "As much to assuage the susceptibility of Madame Georges, as because he does not wish to speak of his benefactions, my lord has left M. d'Harville ignorant of the whole affair." "I can now comprehend the double interest his highness has to discover the son of this poor woman." "You can judge also by this, my dear baron, of the affection that my lord has for all this family, and how lively is his chagrin at seeing the young marquis so sad, with so many reasons to be happy." "Yes, and what does the marquis need? He unites everything, birth, fortune, mind, and youth; his wife is charming, as virtuous as she is handsome." "That is true, and my lord has only thought of what we have been talking about, after having in vain endeavoured to penetrate the cause of the melancholy of M. d'Harville; he has always shown much sensibility at the repeated testimonials of affection from his highness, but has always remained completely conversed on this subject. Perhaps it is of the sickness?" "Behold."

"Yet they say he is very much in love." "That his wife; she gives him no cause for jealousy; Da! I often meet her in society: she is very well surrounded, as almost all young and chaste women are, but her reputation has never lost the slightest taint." "Yes, the truth all boasts much of his wife. He has only on the discussion with her on the subject of the Countess Sarah McGregor." "Does she visit his then?" "By the most unlucky chance, the father of the Marquis d'Harville knew, very seventeen years ago, Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, and her brother Tom, during their stay in Paris, where they were patronised by the English ambassador. Learning that the brother and sister were going to Germany, the old marquis gave them letters of introduction to the father of my lord. Alas! my dear De Graün, perhaps without this introduction many of our troubles would have been avoided, for my lord would never have known this woman. However, when the Countess Sarah returned here, knowing the friendship of his highness for the marquis, she presented herself at the Hôtel d'Harville, in the hopes of meeting my lord; she is as eager in her pursuit as my lord is to avoid her." "To disguise herself as a man to run after him in la cité. No one else but this woman would have thought of such a thing." "She hopes by this to force my lord to an interview, which he has always refused and avoided. But, to return to Madame d'Harville, her husband, to whom my lord had spoken of Sarah as she deserved, had advised his wife to see her as seldom as possible; but the young marchioness, seduced by the hypocritical flatteries of the countess, has a little revolted at the advice of M. d'Harville. Hence some little dissensions, but which certainly are not the cause of the secret grief of the marquis."

"Ah! women, women! my dear Murphy;

I regret much that Madame d'Harville is acquainted with this Sarah. This young and lovely marchioness can only lose by such an acquaintance, such a diabolical creature." "Speaking of diabolical creatures," said Murphy, "here is a despatch relative to Cecily, the unworthy wife of the worthy David." "Between ourselves, my dear Murphy, this audacious mulatto would have well merited the punishment that her husband, our good negro doctor, inflicted on the Maitre d'Ecole. She has also caused blood to flow, and her corruption is frightful." "Yet, notwithstanding all this, so handsome, so seducing! A wicked heart under a gracious exterior always causes me a double horror."

"On this account Cecily is doubly odious; but I hope that this despatch annuls the last orders given by my lord on the subject of this miserable creature." "On the contrary, baron." "My lord, then, still desires that she should be assisted to escape from the fortress where she has been sent for life?" "Yes." "And that her pretended 'ravisser' should bring her to France? to Paris?" "Yes, and more; this despatch orders them to hasten her escape, and to make her travel rapidly, so that she can reach here in ten days at farthest." "You are lost in astonishment. My lord has with him evinced such a repugnance for her!" "Mile. he manifests now, if possible, still more." "To the point sends for her to come to him? How vacant will always be easy to get rid of Cecily ed." does not accomplish what he expects from

"The son of the jailer of the fortress of for seime is ordered to carry her off, feigning though in love with her; he has every facility of. He him to accomplish this project. Delight-baroth her escape, she will follow her supposed speed to Paris; but she will always be an escape-prisoner, and I have everything in order to bring her from the government whenever my lord may require it." "We shall see, my dear De Graun. I also beg you will write to our chancellor, by order of his highness, a legalized copy of the act of marriage of David, for he was married at the ducal palace as an officer of the household of my lord." "By writing by the courier of to-day, we can have this act in eight days at farthest." "When David learned by my lord of the approaching arrival of Cecily, he was thunderstruck; he cried, 'I hope your highness will not oblige me to see this monster!' 'Be easy,' said my lord, 'you shall not see her; but I have need of her for certain projects.' David was much relieved by this declaration. Nevertheless, I am convinced sad recollections are revived for him." "Poor negro! no doubt he loves her still. They say she is so handsome!" "Charming, too charming. The un pitying eye of a Creole is necessary to discover the mixed blood in the imperceptible shade of bistre which lightly colours the crown of the rosy finger-nails of this mulatto; our bright beauties of the north have not a more beautiful complexion, a whiter skin, nor more golden, chestnut-coloured hair." "I was in France when my lord returned from America, bringing with him David and Cecily. I know this excellent man has since that time been attached to his highness by the most lively gratitude, but I have always been ignorant how

he came to be annexed to the suite of our master, and how he married Cecily, who I saw for the first time about a year after her marriage, and 'dieu sait' the scandal she had already created!" "I can inform you of what you wish to know, my dear baron; I accompanied my lord in this voyage to America, where he rescued David and the mulatto from the frightful fate." "You are very kind, my dear Murphy; I listen," said the baron.

CHAPTER IV.

HISTORY OF DAVID AND CECILY.

"M. WILLIS, a rich American planter of Florida," said Murphy, "had observed in one of his black slaves, named David, attached to the infirmity of his habitation, a very remarkable degree of intelligence, a profound commiseration for the poor sick, to whom he gave the medicines prescribed by the physicians, and, finally, a taste so remarkable for the study of botany as applied to medicine, that, without any instruction, he had classified all the plants found on the plantation and in the environs. The residence of M. Willis, situated on the border of the sea, was about fifteen or twenty leagues from the nearest city. The physicians of the country, ignorant enough, put themselves to no inconvenience on account of the distance, and the irregular means of communication. Wishing to remedy this, and have always near him a skilful practitioner, he thought he would send this young man to study medicine and surgery in France. Delighted with the offer, the young man went to Paris; at the end of eight years of hard study, David received his degree, with great distinction, and returned to America to place his knowledge at the disposition of his master." "But David ought to have looked upon himself as free in setting his foot on the soil of France?" "But David was of rare loyalty; he promised M. Willis that he would return, and he did return; and besides, he did not regard as his own, instruction acquired with the money of his master; and still more, he hoped to ameliorate, morally and physically, the sufferings of the slaves, his ancient companions. He promised himself, not only to be their physician, but their support, their defender with their master." "He must have been endowed with rare probity, and a holy feeling for his fellows, to return to a master, after a stay of eight years at Paris, among the most democratic young men of Europe." "From all this you can judge the man. Well, behold him in Florida, and, it must be said, treated with consideration by M. Willis; eating at his table, and sleeping under his roof. Yet this man, stupid, wicked, and sensual—despotic, like most of the Creoles, thought himself very generous in allowing him a salary of six hundred francs. At the end of a few months, the typhus fever broke out; M. Willis was attacked, but promptly cured by the excellent care of David. Of thirty negroes grievously attacked, only two perished. M. Willis, enchanted with the services of David, increased his wages to twelve hundred francs. The black doctor thought himself the happiest man in the world; his brethren looked upon

him as a god; he had obtained, it is true, some amelioration of their condition; he hoped still more for the future; 'en attendant,' he moralized; he consoled these poor people; he exhorted them to resignation; he spoke to them of God, who watched over the negro as over the white; of another world, not peopled with masters and slaves, but with the just and righteous; of another life—eternal—where one was not a beast of burden, the thing of another, but where the victims of this lower world were so happy, that they prayed in heaven for their executioners. What shall I say to you! To these unfortunate beings, who, different from other men, count with bitter joy each step they take towards the tomb—to these unfortunate beings, who, hoping for annihilation, David had caused to hope for an immortal liberty; their chains, then, appeared less heavy, their labour less painful. David was their idol. A year passed in this manner. Among the prettiest slaves had been remarked a mulatto of fifteen, called Cecily. M. Willis took a sultan's fancy for this young girl; but for the first time in his life, perhaps, he received a decided refusal. Cecily loved; she loved David, who, during the epidemic, had saved and nursed her with the tenderest care; love, the most pure love, paid the debt of gratitude. David had too much delicacy to speak of his happiness until the time should come that he could marry her; he only waited until she had attained her sixteenth year. M. Willis, ignorant of this mutual affection, had slyly cast his handkerchief at the pretty mulatto. She came and related to David what had happened, and he resolved to go at once and ask her in marriage.

"The deuse! my dear Murphy, I am afraid to guess the answer of the American sultan. He refused!"

"He refused. He said he had a fancy for this young girl; he had never permitted a refusal from a slave; he liked her, and would have her. David might choose any other woman he pleased. David spoke of his love, which Cecily had returned for a long time. The planter shrugged his shoulders; it was in vain. The Creole had the impudence to say that it was showing a bad example for a master to give up to a slave, and that he would not set this example to satisfy a whim of David. He supplicated; the master became impatient. David, ashamed to humble himself farther, spoke in a firm manner of the services he had rendered, and of his disinterestedness. M. Willis, very much irritated, answered, 'that he was a thousand times too well treated for a slave.' At these words, the indignation of David burst forth; for the first time, he spoke as a man enlightened as to his rights by his sojourn of eight years in France. M. Willis, furious, treated him as a slave, and threatened to chain him. David answered with bitter and violent words. Two hours after, tied to a stake, they lacerated him with a whip, while, before his eyes, Cecily was dragged into the seraglio of the planter."

"The conduct of this planter was stupid and frightful; it was the absurdity of cruelty. He had need of the services of this man, after all."

"Such need, that on this very day, the rage into which he had thrown himself, joined to his habitual intoxication, brought on a most violent

inflammatory disease, which made a rapid progress; an acute disease sat in; an express was sent for a physician, but it was impossible that he could arrive before thirty-six hours."

"Truly, all this seems providential. The fatal position of this man was well deserved."

"The disease made most rapid progress. David could alone save him; but the planter, distrustful, like all such wretches, had not a doubt but that the black, to revenge himself, would poison him; for after the whipping they had thrown David into a dungeon. Finally, frightened at the progress of the malady, sinking under his sufferings, thinking that, with death staring him in the face, he had at least a chance in the generosity of his slave, after long hesitation, Willis ordered David to be released."

"And David saved the planter?" "For five days and nights he watched him as he would his father, combating with the disease step by step, showing profound knowledge and admirable skill; he succeeded in conquering it, to the great surprise of the physician they had sent for, and who only had arrived the second day."

"And when once more restored to health, the planter—" "Not wishing to show his shame before the slave who had overwhelmed him with such generosity, he contrived, with considerable expense, to secure the services of the physician, by attaching him to his household. David was sent back to his dungeon." "That is horrible! but it does not astonish me; David would have been for this man a living remorse." "This barbarous conduct was not dictated alone by vengeance and jealousy. The negroes of M. Willis loved David with all the ardour of gratitude; he was for them the saviour of their souls and bodies. They knew what he had done for their master during his late illness. Thus emerging, as if by a miracle, from the brutal apathy into which slavery usually plunges the creature, they showed plainly their indignation, or rather, their grief, when they saw David wounded with the lashes of the whip. M. Willis, much exasperated, thought he saw in this symptoms of a revolt. Knowing the influence that David had acquired over his slaves, he thought he might direct a rising to revenge himself for the ingratitude of his master. This fear was a new motive for the planter to overwhelm him with cruel treatment, and place him in a position where he could do no injury." "With this view of the case, this conduct seems to be less foolish, although none the less ferocious."

"A short time after these events we arrived in America. My lord had chartered a Danish brig at St. Thomas; we visited, incognito, several of the habitations on the coast. We were magnificently received by M. Willis. The evening after our arrival, at table, excited as much by drink as the desire of boasting, M. Willis related to us as a good joke the history of David and Cecily; for I forgot to tell you that this unfortunate creature was also cast into a dungeon, to punish her for her disdainful rejection of her master. At this frightful story his highness thought that Willis was boasting, or that he was drunk; the man was drunk, but he was not boasting. To convince our incredulity, the planter arose from the table reeling, told a slave to take a lantern, and

conduct us to the dungeon of David." "Well?" "Never in my life have I seen such a heart-rending spectacle. Haggard, thin, half naked, covered with sores, David and this unhappy girl, chained by the middle of the body, the one at one end of the dungeon, the other at the opposite, they looked like spectres. The lantern which lighted us cast on this picture a still more gloomy shade. David pronounced not a word. The planter said, with cruel irony, 'Well! doctor, how d'ye do! you who are so learned! save yourself, then!' The black answered by one word, with a gesture sublime; he slowly raised his right hand, and pointed with his finger towards heaven; and without looking at his master, he said, in a solemn tone, 'God!' 'Dieu!' answered the planter, with a shout of laughter; 'say to him I defy him!—to carry away my slaves before death!'"

"He was a disgusting fool!"

"We were so much disgusted, my lord said not a word. We left the dungeon. We returned on board the brig, which was anchored off at a short distance. At one o'clock in the morning, when all the inhabitants were plunged in a profound sleep, my lord landed with eight men well armed, went straight to the dungeon, forced it, and carried off David and Cecily. The two victims were carried on board without being perceived; after which my lord and myself returned to the mansion of the planter. Strange! unaccountable! these men torture their slaves, yet take no precautions against them; they sleep with the windows and doors open. We reached easily the chamber of the planter, lighted by a small lamp. My lord awoke this man. He started up, his brain still bewildered from the effects of drink. 'You have this night defied God to take away your two victims, before their death! He does take them away,' said monseigneur. Then taking a bag that I carried, and which held 25,000 francs in gold, he threw it on the bed, and added, 'This will indemnify you for the loss of your slaves. To your violence which kills, I oppose a violence which saves. God shall be the judge;' and we disappeared, leaving M. Willis stupefied, immovable, believing himself in a dream. Some minutes afterward we were on board the brig, and set sail."

"It seems to me, my dear Murphy, that his highness paid too largely to this scoundrel for the loss of his slaves; for, in truth, David did not belong to him any more." "We had calculated about the expense incurred by David's studies at Paris during eight years, and then added at least three times their value as common slaves. Our conduct was contrary to law, I know; but if you had seen the almost agonizing condition of these poor creatures, if you had heard this sacrilegious defiance of God, you would comprehend how my lord wished, as he said, on this occasion 'to play a little the part of Providence.'" "It was as much to be censured, and as much to be justified as the punishment of the *Maitre d'Ecole*, my worthy sir. And nothing occurred from this?" "Nothing could happen. The brig was under Danish colours; the incognito of his highness strictly guarded; we passed for rich Englishmen. To whom could M. Willis, if he dared to complain, address his reclamations? In fact, he told us

himself, and the physician attested it, that the two slaves could not have lived eight days longer in that frightful dungeon. It needed the greatest care and attention to restore David and Cecily to health. "Since this time, he has remained attached to the household as physician, and he has for my lord the most profound attachment." "David married Cecily, without doubt, on his arrival in Europe?" "This marriage, which promised to be so happy, took place in the chapel of the palace; but a strange and extraordinary change—hardly in the enjoyment of an unlooked-for position, forgetting all that David had suffered for her, and all that she had suffered for him, ashamed, in this new world, that she had married a negro, Cecily, seduced by a man of great depravity, committed a first fault; one would say, that the innate perversity of this creature, until then dormant, only awaited this moment to develop itself with fearful energy. You know the rest—the scandal of her adventures. After two years' marriage, David, who had as much confidence as love, learned all this infamy: like a thunder-bolt, it drew him from his blind and profound security."

"It was said that he wished to kill his wife?"

"Yes; but, thanks to request of monseigneur, he consented that she should be imprisoned for life in a fortress; and it is this prison that his highness has just opened—to your great astonishment and mine, I will not conceal it, my dear baron." "Frankly, the resolution of my lord astonishes me the more, since the governor of the fortress has, on several occasions, informed his highness that this woman was incorrigible: it was impossible to change this audacious character, hardened by vice; yet monseigneur persists in bringing her here.—For what end? and for what motive?"

"My dear baron, I am just as ignorant as you are. But it grows late, and his highness desires your courier should set out as soon as possible for Gerolstein." "Before two o'clock he shall be on the road. So, my dear Murphy, farewell until to-night."

"To-night?" "Have you forgotten the grand ball at the embassy of * * * *, which his highness has promised to attend?" "Just so: since the absence of Colonel Varner and Count d'Harneim, I forget that I fulfil at the same time the functions of chamberlain and aid-de-camp."

"But, apropos of the count and colonel; when will they return? Will their missions be soon fulfilled?" "My lord, you know, keeps them away as long as possible, so that he can be more at liberty. As to the mission which he has given them, sending one to Strasbourg and the other to Avignon, I will confide it to you some of these days when we shall be out of spirits; for I shall defy the most gloomy hypochondriac to refrain from laughing at certain passages of the despatches of these worthy gentlemen, who took their pretended missions with incredible gravity." "To be frank, I never could comprehend why his highness had placed the colonel and count in his private service."

"How! Colonel Varner! is he not an admirable specimen of a soldier? Is there in the whole Germanic Confederation a finer figure or handsomer mustaches! and when he is girded, caparisoned, bridled, plumed, can there be seen a more triumphant, glorious—a prouder, a finer

—animal!" "It is true: but this beauty prevents him from having a very excessively knowing look." "True; my lord says, thanks to the colonel, he is accustomed to find quite tolerable the most stupid people in the world. Before holding certain audiences, he shuts himself up for a half hour with the colonel, and he comes out all wise, all gay, and ready to defy 'ennui' in person."

"Just like the Roman soldier before a forced march, shoes himself with sandals of lead, so as to find all fatigue light in throwing them off. I appreciate now the utility of the colonel. But the Count d'Harneim—" "Is also of great utility to my lord; in hearing without cessation rattle at his side this old empty toy, brilliant and sonorous; in seeing this soap-bubble, so inflated with nothing, so magnificently variegated, who represents the theatrical and weak side of sovereign power, my lord feels more vividly still the vanity of this empty pomp; and from contrast, he has often been indebted to the sight of the useless and reflecting chamberlain for the most serious and fertile ideas." "Yet still, to be just, my dear Murphy, in what can be found a more perfect model of a chamberlain? Who knows better than the excellent D'Harneim the innumerable rules and traditions of etiquette? Who knows better how to wear an enamelled cross on the collar, or more majestically a golden key on the back?"

"Speaking of this, baron, monseigneur pretends that the back of a chamberlain has quite a particular look; that is to say, an expression at the same time constrained and revolting; for, oh grief! it is always on the back of a chamberlain where is displayed the insignia of his office; and, assenting to his opinion, this worthy D'Harneim seems always to be trying to present himself back foremost, so that his importance can be at once seen." "The fact is, the constant subject of the count's meditations is to find out what fatal imagination could have placed the key of the chamberlain on his back; for, as he has said with much sensitiveness, a sort of passionate grief, 'The devil! one does not open a door with his back!'"

"Baron, the courier, the courier!" said Murphy, showing the hour to the baron. "Bad man, who made me talk! it is your fault. Present my respects to his highness," said M. de Graün, taking his hat; "à ce soir, my dear Murphy." "A ce soir, my dear baron; a little late, for I am sure that my lord will wish to visit to-day even, the mysterious house of the rue du Temple."

CHAPTER V.

A HOUSE OF THE RUE DU TEMPLE.

To avail himself of the information that the Baron de Graün had collected concerning La Gonaleuse and François Germain, Rodolphe would have to go to the Rue due Temple and to the house of the notary Jacques Ferrand. To the latter, to endeavour to obtain from Madame Séraphin some indications of the parents of Fleur de Marie; to the house in the Rue du Temple, recently inhabited by François Germain, to try to discover the retreat of this young man by means of Mlle. Rigolotte: a task suffi-

ciently difficult, this grisette knowing, perceived that the son of the Maître d'Ecole had the greatest interest to keep his new abode a profound secret. By hiring in this house the room formerly occupied by Germain, Rodolphe would thus facilitate his researches, and place himself in a situation to observe the different kind of people who occupied the house.

The same day of the conversation between the Baron de Graün and Murphy, a gloomy winter's day, Rodolphe went about three o'clock to the Rue du Temple. Situated in the centre of a populous and busy quarter, this house offered nothing in its aspect any way peculiar; it consisted of a ground-floor, occupied by a "rogomiste," and four stories, surmounted by a garret. A dark, narrow alley led to a little court, or, rather, a kind of yard, five or six feet broad, completely deprived of air and light, an infected receptacle of all the filth and dirt of the house, which rained down, as it were, from each story. At the foot of a damp and black staircase, a reddish light indicated the lodge of the porter; a room very much smoked, from the continual burning of a lamp, which was necessary, even at midday, to illuminate this obscure hole, where we will follow Rodolphe, who was dressed as a shopkeeper's clerk in his every-day clothes.

He wore a *paletôt* of a doubtful colour, a hat not very new, a red *cravat*, and heavy shoes. To complete the illusion of his part, Rodolphe had under his arm a package of goods carefully tied up. He entered the lodge, to ask to look at the vacant room. A lamp placed behind a globe filled with water, lighted the lodge; at the farther end was a bed covered with a harlequin counterpane, formed of sundry bits of stuffs of all kinds and colours; at the left, a commode of walnut with a marble top, by way of ornament; a little Saint John, of wax, with his white lamb and his white wig, the whole placed under a cage of cracked glass, most ingeniously mended with strips of blue paper; two plated candlesticks, very much tarnished, bearing, instead of candles, a couple of oranges, no doubt recently presented to the porter's wife as a New-year's gift; and two boxes, one of straw of variegated colours, and the other covered with small shells. Between the two boxes, and under a glass globe, one could admire a small pair of boots of red morocco, real boots for a puppet, but most carefully and artistically confectioned. This "*chef-d'œuvre*," as the artisans say, joined to an abominable odour of rancid leather and fantastical arabesques, delineated on the wall by means of an innumerable quantity of old shoes, plainly indicated that the porter of this house had been a maker of new shoes before he had descended to the operation of mending old ones.

When Rodolphe ventured into this den, Monsieur Pipelet, the porter, momentarily absent, was represented by Madame Pipelet: seated near an iron stove, which was in the middle of the room, she appeared to be listening to the boiling of the pot. The French Hogarth, Henri Moanier, has so admirably stereotyped *la portière*, that we will content ourselves by begging the reader, if he wishes to figure to himself Madame Pipelet, to recall to his mind the most wrinkled, the most pimply, the most niggardly, the most ragged, the most quarrelsome, the

most venomous of "portières" immortalized by this eminent artist. The only addition we will permit ourselves to make to this "idéal," which cannot fail to be of marvellous reality, shall be a strange "coiffure," composed of a perwig "à la Titus," originally blonde, but changed by time to an agreeable mixture of red, yellow, brown, and fawn colour, enamelling, as it were, an inextricable profusion of coarse, bristling, tangled locks. Madame Pipelet never went without this unique and everlasting ornament of her sexagenary cranium.

At the sight of Rodolphe, the "portière" pronounced in a surly tone these decisive words: "Where are you going to?" "Madame, there is a chamber and a cabinet, I believe, to be let in this house!" asked Rodolphe, emphasizing the word *madame*; which flattered Madame Pipelet not a little. She answered less sharply, "There is a room to be let on the fourth story, but it cannot be seen. Alfred is gone out!" "Your son, without doubt, Madame; will he soon return?" "No, sir, he is not my son; he is my husband. Pray, why should not Pipelet be called Alfred?" "He has the most perfect right, madame; but if you will permit, I will await his return. I wish to hire this chamber; the quarter and street suit me, the house pleases me, for it appears to be admirably well kept. However, before looking at the apartment, I should like to know if you could, madame, take charge of my room? I am always accustomed to employ the 'concierges'; that is, when they are willing."

This proposition expressed in such flattering terms, "concierger!" completely gained Madame Pipelet. She answered, "Most certainly, sir. I will take charge of your chamber. I flatter myself, for six francs a month, you shall be served like a prince."

"Agreed, for the six francs. Madame, your name?"

"Pomone-Fortunée-Anastasia Pipelet."

"Well, Madame Pipelet, I'll allow you six francs per month for your wages. If the chamber suits me—what is the price?"

"With the cabinet, 150 francs; not one sou less. The principal tenant is a dog—a dog who would skin an egg."

"And you call him—" "Monsieur Bras-Rouge." The name and the recollections it awakened made Rodolphe shudder. "You say, Madame Pipelet, that the principal tenant is called—" "M. Bras-Rouge. Well!" "And he lives?" "Rue aux Fèves, No. 13; he has also a tavern in the moats of the Champs Elysées." There was no longer any doubt it was the same man. This encounter seemed strange to Rodolphe. "If M. Bras-Rouge is the chief tenant," said he, "who is the proprietor of the house?" "M. Bourdon; but I arrange affairs altogether with M. Bras-Rouge." Wishing to inspire the "portière" with confidence, Rodolphe replied, "Look here, my dear Madame Pipelet; I am quite tired; I am almost frozen with cold. Do me the favour to go the Rogoniste who lives in this house, and bring me a bottle of Cassis and two glasses, or rather three, for your husband will soon return," and he gave her five francs. "Ah! now, monsieur, you wish, then, from the first, one shall adore you," cried the "portière," whose pimpled nose seemed to be illuminated with all the fires of

an anticipated debauch. "Yes, Madame Pipelet, I wish to be adored." "Ca me chausse, ça ma chausse," but I will only bring two glasses; Alfred and I, we always drink out of the same. Poor dear, he is so dainty for all that concerns women!" "Go, Madame Pipelet, we will await Alfred." "Ah! now, if some one comes, you will take care of the lodge?" "Be easy." The old woman went out.

Remaining alone, Rodolphe reflected on the singular circumstance that again brought him in contact with Bras-Rouge; what astonished him the most was, that François Germain could have remained three months in this house, before he was discovered by the accomplices of the Maître d'Ecole, who were in concert with Bras-Rouge. At this moment, a postman knocked against the window of the lodge, and passing through his arm, holding two letters, said, "Three sous!" "Six sous, since there are two letters," said Rodolphe. "One is paid," answered the man: After having paid it, Rodolphe at first regarded the two letters mechanically, but soon they seemed to him to be worthy of closer examination. The one addressed to Madame Pipelet exhaled from within its envelope of satin paper, a strong smell of a "sachet" of Spanish leather. On its seal of red wax was the cipher C. R., surmounted by a helmet, with, for support, a cross of the legion of honour. The address was in a bold hand; the heraldic pretensions of the helmet and legion of honour made Rodolphe smile, and confirmed him in the opinion that this letter was not written by a woman. But who was the correspondent, perfumed, emblazoned, of Madame Pipelet? The other letter, of a common gray paper, sealed with a wafer, and stamped with a thimble, was for M. César Bradamanté, surgeon dentist. Evidently a counterfeit, the writing of this subscription was in capital letters. Was it a presentiment, a fantasy of his imagination, or reality, this letter appeared to Rodolphe to have a sorrowful appearance. He remarked some letters of the address, half effaced, in a place where the paper was slightly tumbled. A tear had fallen there. Madame Pipelet re-entered, bringing the bottle of cassis and two glasses. "I have been very slow, have I not, sir? But when one once gets into the shop of père Joseph, there is no way to get out. Ah! the old possessed! would you believe, with an old woman like myself, he wishes to play the fool?" "The devil! if Alfred knew that!" "Don't speak of it, my blood boils when I think of it. Alfred is as jealous as a Bedouin; and yet, on the part of the Père Joseph, it is only a joke—a joke, on my honour." "Here are two letters the postman has left," said Rodolphe. "Ah! 'mon Dieu'—excuse me: and you have paid?" "Yes." "You are very kind; then I'll account to you for it when we make our settlement. How much is it?" "Three sous," answered Rodolphe, smiling at the singular method of reimbursement adopted by Madame Pipelet. "How! three sous?" "It is six sous; there are two letters." "I could abuse your confidence by saying it was six sous, but I am incapable of such conduct, Madame Pipelet. One of the two letters, addressed to you, is franked; and, without being indiscreet, I take the liberty of observing

that you have a correspondent there, whose 'billets doux' smell furiously good." "Let us see," said the "portière," taking the perfumed billet. "'Ma foi,' it is true, it has the air of a 'billet doux'; say now, monsieur, a billet doux! ah! well! for instance—a billet doux! who is then the blackguard who dares!" "And if Alfred was here, Madame Pipelet?" "Don't speak of it, or I shall faint in your arms." "Oh! I shan't say another word, Madame Pipelet!" "But an't I a fool? I see," said the "portière," shrugging her shoulders. "I know—I know it's from the commandant. Ah! what a sudden fright, I had. But that don't hinder one from reckoning: let's see, it is three sous for the other letter, is it not? Thus we say: fifteen sous for the ossia and three sous for the letter—I hold that makes eighteen; eighteen and these two that you see make twenty, and four francs make one hundred sous; short accounts make long friends." "And here is a franc for you, Madame Pipelet. You have such a miraculous manner of reimbursing the advances that one makes for you, that I must encourage you." "Twenty sous! you give me twenty sous! And for what?" cried Madame Pipelet, at once surprised and alarmed at this wonderful generosity. "It shall be on account of the earnest money, if I take the room." "As such I accept it; but I shall tell Alfred." "Certainly; but here is another letter, addressed to M. César Bradamanté." "Ah! yes; the dentist of the third. I'll put that in the letter-boot."

Rodolphe thought he had misunderstood her, but he saw Madame Pipelet gravely throw the letter in an old boot nailed against the wall. "How!" said he, looking at her with surprise. "You put that letter—" "Well, sir, I put it into the letter-boot. In that way nothing is lost. When the lodgers enter, Alfred or I shake the boot, and each one picks and chooses for himself." "Your house is so perfectly well kept, that I am only more and more eager to be an inhabitant; this letter-boot, above all, charms me." "Mon Dieu! it is very simple," answered Madame Pipelet, modestly. "Alfred had this old odd boot; so he thought he would make it of use to the tenants." Saying this, the "portière" had unsealed the letter which was addressed to her. She turned and twisted it about, and, after a moment's hesitation, she said to Rodolphe, "It is always Alfred who reads my letters, because I don't know how. If you would, monsieur, take Alfred's place—" "To read the letter? willingly," said Rodolphe, very curious to know who was the correspondent of Madame Pipelet. He read as follows: "To-morrow, Friday, at eleven o'clock, you will have a large fire made in the two saloons, have the glasses well cleaned, take all the coverings off the furniture, and be careful not to injure the gilding in dusting. If by chance I have not arrived, and a lady should come and ask for M. Charles at about one o'clock, show her up to the apartment, lock the door, and keep the key until I come." Notwithstanding the singular "redaction" of this billet, Rodolphe understood perfectly its import, and said to the "portière," "Who lives on the first floor?" The old woman placed her yellow and wrinkled finger on her lower lip, and answered with a malicious chuckle, "Hush! It is an intrigue."

"I ask you this, my dear Madame Pipelet, because, before one takes room in a house, one likes to know." "Oh yes! quite plain, 'tell me the company, I'll tell you the man'; is it not so?" "Just what I was going to say." "However, I can tell you what I know about it—not a long story. About six weeks ago, an upholsterer came here to look at the first floor, which was to let, and to ask the price; the next morning he came with a fine young fair-haired man, small mustachies, cross of honour, fine linen. The upholsterer called him 'commandant.' "He was a soldier, then?" "Soldier!" answered Madame Pipelet, shrugging her shoulders; "oh, go away! Alfred might as well call himself a 'concierger.' " "How?" "He only belongs to the national guard—to the staff. The upholsterer called him so, just to flatter him—just as it flatters Alfred to be called a 'concierger.' In fine, when the 'commandant' had seen all, he said to the upholsterer, 'It is good; it suits me; arrange for me; see the proprietor.' 'Yes, commandant,' replied the other. And the next day the upholsterer signed the lease, in his own name, with M. Bras-Rouge, paying him six months in advance, because, it appears, the young man did not wish to be known. Right away came the workmen, bringing sofas, silk curtains, gilt glasses, superb furniture; it is as handsome as any café on the boulevards! without speaking of carpets everywhere, and so thick and soft that one would really think they were walking on velvet. When it was all finished, the commandant came to take a look; he said to Alfred, 'Can you take charge of this apartment, where I shall not come often; make the fires from time to time, and prepare everything to receive me, when I advise you by the post?' 'Yes, commandant,' said the flatterer of an Alfred. 'And how much will you charge for this?' 'Twenty francs a month, commandant.' Twenty francs! oh, come now! you joke, porter!" Now just imagine this fine gentleman, bargaining like a miser with poor people, for one or two pieces of five francs, when he had been at an abominable expense for an apartment which he did not occupy! However, by force of battling, we got twelve francs. Twelve francs! now tell me, don't it make you sweat! Two-penny commandant, get out! How different from you, monsieur," added the "portière," addressing Rodolphe in a pleasant manner; "you do not wish to be called 'commandant'; you have the appearance of a nobody, yet you agree with me for the six francs at once." "And has this young man returned since?" "You shall see; that is the funniest part of it; it appears that some one doses him too much. He has already written three times, like to-day, 'light the fire, arrange everything, and a lady would come.' Oh yes! go and see if she will come!" "Nobody came?" "Listen! The first of the three times, the 'commandant' arrived in great snuff, humming to himself, and playing the lord; he waited two mortal hours—nobody. When he passed out, we, Pipelet and myself, watched for him, to see his face and vex him, saying to him, 'Commandant, there has no one come at all—no one; no little lady to ask for you.' 'Very well, very well,' he answered in a rage,

* The porters of a better class of houses are so called.

and away he went in a huff, biting his nails for consolation. The second time, before he had arrived, a porter brought a little note addressed to M. Charles. I suspected that he was once more physicked. We, Pipelet and myself, were bursting with laughter when the commandant arrived. 'Commandant,' said I, carrying the outside of my left hand to my periwig, like a real trooper, 'here is a letter: it appears there is counter-march again to-day.' He looked at me as proud as a peacock, opened the letter and read it, became as red as a crab, then said to us, pretending not to be put out, 'I knew no one would come; I only came to tell you to take good care of everything.' It wasn't true; it was only to conceal from us that he had been tricked that he said that; and thereupon he went shuffling off, singing; but he was vexed, I tell you. It is well done, well done! two-penny commandant; that will teach you another time to give only twelve francs for taking charge of your rooms." "And the third time?"

"Ah! the third time, I believe it was for good. The commandant arrived—a very fine young man, notwithstanding, and well dressed, and scented like a musk-rat. He hardly touched the ground, he was so much puffed up. He took the key, and said to us, as he went up stairs, in a lively and proud tone, 'You will inform this person that the door is very near.' Good! us two Pipelets, we were so curious to see this person, although we didn't reckon on her coming, that we went out of the lodge, to watch at the steps of the door of the alley. This time a little blue hack, with the blinds down, stopped before the house. 'Good! it is she,' said I to Alfred; 'let us fall back a little, so as not to frighten her.' The coachman opened the door. Then we saw a little lady with a muff on her lap, and a black veil which concealed her face, and a handkerchief which she held over her mouth; for she appeared to be weeping; but no sooner were the steps let down, than, instead of getting out, the lady said a few words to the coachman, who, quite astonished, shut the door."

"This woman did not get out?" "No, monsieur; she threw herself back in the carriage, and placed her hands before her eyes. I rushed out, and before the man had time to mount to his seat, I said to him, 'Well, my good fellow, where do you come from?' 'From the Rue Saint Dominique, at the corner of the Rue Belle-Chasse.'"

At these words Rodolphe shuddered. The Marquis d'Harville, one of his best friends, overwhelmed by some secret grief, as we have stated before, lived just in this place. Was it the marchioness who was thus rushing to her ruin! Had her husband any suspicions? perhaps the sole cause of his secret grief. These doubts rushed to the mind of Rodolphe. Yet he well knew all the intimate friends of the marchioness, and he could not recall any one to mind that in any way resembled the commandant. After all, this young woman might have taken a hack at this place, without living there: nothing proved it to be the marchioness; nevertheless, he retained vague and painful suspicions.

His unquiet and absorbed manner had not escaped the portière.

"Well, monsieur, what are you thinking about?" said she. "I was thinking why this woman came to the door, and then suddenly changed her mind." "What would you have, monsieur; an idea, a fright, a superstition? We poor women are so weak, so cowardly," said the horrible old woman, with an affected air of timidity. "It seems to me that if I were secretly—Alfred—I should be obliged—take courage—several times before—but never, never, everlastingly never! poor dear. There is not an inhabitant of this earth that can boast—" "I believe you, Madame Pipelet; but this young person—" "I don't know she was young, for I only saw the end of her nose. Certain it is, that she went away as she came, without drum or trumpet. If some one had given us ten francs, we could not have been more pleased." "How is that?"

"In thinking how the commandant would act there would certainly be something to laugh at—certainly. In the first place, instead of going at once and telling him that the lady was gone, we let him dance for an hour. Then I went up—I had on my list shoes; I reached the door; I pushed it—it squeaked; the staircase is as dark as a furnace, and so is the entrance to the apartments. Just as I entered, the commandant took me in his arms, saying in an indolent manner, 'Mon Dieu! my angel, how late you come.'"

Notwithstanding the gravity of his thoughts, Rodolphe could not keep from smiling; above all, in looking at the grotesque periwig and the horribly wrinkled and pimpled face of the heroine of this ridiculous mistake.

Madame Pipelet continued laughing and making wry faces, which made her still more hideous. "Ha! ha! ha! but you shall see. I answered not a word, I held my breath, I abandoned myself to the commandant; but all of a sudden he cried out, pushing me off, the beast! as much disgusted as if he had touched a spider: 'But who the devil are you?' 'It's me, commandant; Madame Pipelet, the "portière"; that is the reason you ought to keep your hands off, and not take me by the waist, and call me your angel, and say I come too late. If Alfred was only here.' 'What do you want?' said he to me, furiously. 'Commandant, the little lady came just now in a carriage.' 'Well! show her up; are you a fool! did I not tell you to send her up?' I let him go on—did not deceive him. 'Yes, commandant, it is true, you told me to send her up stairs.' 'Well!' 'It is that the little lady—' 'Speak then!' 'It is that the little lady went away again.' 'Get out; you have said or done something foolish,' cried he, still more furious. 'No, commandant; the little lady did not get out of the carriage; when the coachman opened the door she told him to take her back again.' 'The carriage can't be far off,' cried the commandant, rushing towards the door. 'Oh yes! yes! it has been gone more than an hour,' I answered. 'An hour—an hour! And why did you not come and tell me before?' cried he with renewed rage. 'Marry, because we thought you would be so much put out because you have not made your expenses, even this time. Caught!' said I. 'Miriflor, that will teach you to feel so sick at your stomach another time when you touch me.' 'Get out;

"You only say and do 'Sottis  s,'" cried he in a rage, in taking off his robe de chambre    la tartare, and throwing on the ground his Greek cap of velvet, embroidered with gold—fine cap I tell you—and the robe de chambre! it almost blinded one; the commandant looked like a glow-worm." "And since that time, neither he, nor the lady have returned?" "No; wait for the end of my story," said Madame Pipelet.

CHAPTER VI.

THE THREE FLOORS.

"THE end of the story—this is it," continued Madame Pipelet. "I ran down stairs to find Alfred. Who should be in the lodge but the 'portiere' of No. 19, and the oysterwoman who stands at the door of the 'rogomiste.' I related to them how the commandant had taken me by the waist. Such shouts of laughter! and Alfred, although he is very melan—yes, melancholy, as he calls it—although he is very melancholy from the treatment of that monster Cabrion." Rodolphe looked at the woman with astonishment. "Yes, some day, when we shall be better acquainted, I will tell you about it. However, to go on, even Alfred laughed, and began to call me his angel. At this moment the commandant came out of his room, and shut his door to go away; but as he heard us laugh, he didn't dare to come down for fear we should make fun of him; we suspected the cause, and you should have heard the oysterwoman, crying out in her harsh voice, 'Pipelet, you come late, my angel!' Thereupon, the commandant went back to his room, slamming the door with a great noise, like a great tiger as he is—for he must be a tiger—the end of his nose is white. Finally, he opened his door more than ten times to listen if there was any one at the lodge. There we were; we hadn't bugged. At last, seeing that we would not go away, he made up his mind what to do—came down the stairs four steps at a time, threw me the key without saying a word, and ran out in a violent rage in the midst of our shouts of laughter, while the oysterwoman sung out, 'You come very late, my angel!'" "But you ran the risk of the commandant's no longer employing you." "Oh, yes! he did not dare—we had him. We knew where his magpie lived; and if he said anything to us, we would threaten to expose him; and, besides, for his mean twelve francs who would take charge of his rooms? Some woman out of the house? She had better try it; we'd lead her a pretty dance. Miserable curmudgeon! Would you think, monsieur, he had the meanness to pick out the sticks of wood that we should burn while waiting for him? He is surely some parvenu, some nobody, rich of a sudden—head of a lord and body of a beggar; spends at one end and pinches at the other. I don't wish him any other harm; but it does amuse me to see him made a fool of. I'll bet to-morrow 'twill be the same thing. I'll go and tell the oysterwoman; she'll come; we'll have some fun. If the little lady comes, we'll see if she is a blonde or a brunette, and if she is pretty. I say, monsieur, when one thinks of the ninny of a husband! a fine farce, is it not? But that's his business, poor dear man. Well, to-morrow we shall see the little lady; and in spite of her veil, she will have to hold her nose pretty low if we don't see the colour of her eyes. But par-

don me a moment, while I take my pot from the fire; it don't sing any more: it is that the 'fricot' demands to be eaten. It was of double tripe; it will cheer up Alfred a little; for, as he has said himself, 'For double tripe he would betray France—his belle France!' the old dear."

While Madame Pipelet busied herself with her domestic affairs Rodolphe gave himself up to the most sad reflections.

The woman in question (whether it was the marchioness or not) had, without doubt, for a long time hesitated before granting a first and second rendezvous; then, alarmed at the consequences of her imprudence, a salutary remorse had probably prevented her from accomplishing her dangerous promise. At length, conceding to an irresistible "entraînement," she arrived all in tears, agitated by a thousand fears, at the door of this house; but at the moment of being lost for ever, the voice of duty made itself heard: once more she escaped dishonour. And for whom had she braved so much shame, so many dangers? Rodolphe knew the world and the human heart; he prejudged with almost a certainty the character of the commandant, from the sketch given of him by the 'portiere' with a coarse naivet  . Was not this man ridiculously proud enough to be vain of a title taken from a grade absolutely insignificant in a military point of view? a man sufficiently devoid of all tact not to shroud himself in the most profound incognito—not to surround with mystery the culpable actions of a woman who risked everything for him? a man such a fool, and so mean that he could not comprehend, that by economizing some 'louis' he exposed her to the insolent and shameful jokes of the people of this house?

Thus the next day, impelled by a fatal influence, but conscious of the gravity of her fault, having for her whole support in her terrible anguish but a blind faith in the discretion and honour of this man, this unfortunate young woman would come to this rendezvous lost; and she would be obliged to confront the curious and bold regards of some miserable wretches, and perhaps hear their foul and vulgar jokes.

What disgrace! what a lesson! for a poor misguided woman who, until then, had only lived in the most charming, the most poetic illusions of love! And the man for whom she braved so much opprobrium, so many perils, would he be the least touched by the heart-rending anxieties he had caused? No! Poor woman! a blind passion had once more brought her to the borders of the abyss, from which a courageous effort of virtue saved her again. And what were the feelings of this man at the thought of this holy and sorrowful struggle? He was seized with rage and anger, in thinking that he had been inconvenienced three times for nothing, and that his ridiculous fatuity is gravely compromised in the eyes of—his porter. "Oh!" thought Rodolphe, "what a terrible lesson if this woman (who is unknown to me, I hope) could have heard in what a vulgar manner they had spoken of a step, culpable without doubt, but which had cost so much love, so many tears, so many fears, so much remorse!"

And then, in thinking that perhaps the Marchioness d'Harville might be the heroine of this adventure, Rodolphe asked himself, "By what aberration of mind, by what fatality, M. d'Harville, young, sensible, devoted, generous, and, above all, tenderly attached to his wife, could be

sacrificed by a being necessarily silly; an egotistical and contemptible miser. Could the marchioness be taken with the man's appearance alone? for he was said to be very handsome."

Rodolphe knew, however, Madame d'Harville to be a woman of good feeling, mind, and taste, and of great elevation of character; never had there been the slightest whisper about her reputation. Where could she have known this man? Rodolphe saw her frequently, and he could not remember of ever having met any person at the Hotel d'Harville that at all reminded him of the commandant. After long reflection, he came almost to the conclusion that the marchioness had nothing to do with this affair.

Madame Pipelet, having finished her culinary duties, resumed her conversation with Rodolphe. "Who lives on the second floor?" demanded he.

"It is the Mère Burette, a great woman for cards. She can read in your hands just like a book. There are some people very 'comme il faut,' who come to have their fortunes told, and she gains more money than she is worth; and, besides, fortune-telling is not her only trade."

"What does she do besides?"

"She keeps a little private pawnbroker's shop."

"How?"

"I tell you this because you are a young man, and it cannot but help to strengthen your notion for living here."

"And why then?" "The season is coming when even the most cautious are sometimes pressed. Well, it is always convenient to have a resource in one's own house, instead of being obliged to run to my *auut's*, where it is much more humiliating; for one goes there seen and known by the whole town."

"To your *auut's*? She lends, then, upon pawn?"

"How! don't you know? Come, come, *farceur*! You playing the innocent at your age?"

"I play the innocent? In what manner, Madame Pipelet?"

"In asking me if my *auut* lends upon pawn."

"Because—" "Because all young men arrived at the age of reason know that going to place anything at a pawnbroker's is called *going to see my auut*."

"Oh! I understand: your second-floor lodger is a pawnbroker?" "Come, come, Monsieur Know-nothing; certainly she is a pawnbroker, and not so dear as at the grand shops; and, besides, there is no trouble at all—no papers, tickets—not at all, at all. For instance, you take to the Mère Burette a shirt which is worth three francs: she'll lend you ten sous on it; at the end of eight days you'll bring her twenty: if not, she keeps the shirt. It is very plain, *hein*? always even money: a child can understand it."

"It is very clear, in effect; but I thought this kind of trade was forbidden." "Ah! ah! ah!" cried Madame Pipelet, screaming with laughter; "you have just come to town, ain't you, young man? excuse me, but I speak to you like a mother, and as if you were my child."

"You are very kind."

"Without doubt this is forbidden; but if one only did what the law allowed, one would sit very often with their arms folded. The Mère Burette does not write, gives no receipts; there are no proofs against her; she laughs at the police. It is funny enough, I tell you, to see what is brought to her. You wouldn't believe what she lends on sometimes! I have seen her ad-

vance money on a gray parrot, who swore like a trooper, the rogue."

"On a parrot? But what amount?"

"Stop a bit. He was known; it was the parrot of a postman's widow, who lives near here, in the Rue Sainte Avoie, Madame Herblot; every one knew that she thought as much of her parrot as she did of her skin. The Mère Burette said to her, 'I'll lend you ten francs on your beast; but if in eight days, at twelve o'clock, I haven't my twenty francs—'"

"Her ten francs."

"With the interest it made just twenty francs—always even money. 'If I haven't my twenty francs, and cost of feed, I give Jacquot a little salad of parsley, seasoned with arsenic.' She knew her customer well, I tell you. With this threat, the Mère Burette had her twenty francs at the end of seven days; and Madame Herblot carried off her horrid beast, who had bored our ears every day with his vulgar oaths, so much that Alfred blushed, for he is very modest. It is not strange, for his father was a priest. In the revolution, you know, there were some priests who married nuns."

"And the Mère Burette has no other trade, I suppose?"

"She has no other, if you please. And yet I don't know what kind of business she carries on in a little room where no one enters except M. Bras Rouge and old *Borgnesse*, that is called La Chouette."

Rodolphe looked at the portière with astonishment. She, mistaking the look of surprise, said,

"It is a funny name, ain't it, La Chouette?"

"Yes; and does this woman come here often?"

"She has not made her appearance for six weeks; but the day before yesterday we saw her; she limped a little."

"And what did she come to do with the fortune-teller?"

"Just what I don't know; but I have always remarked that on the days they have the secret conference in the little room, the *Borgnesse* always brings a bundle in her *cabas*, and M. Bras Rouge one under his cloak, but that they take nothing away."

"And these bundles, what do they contain?"

"I know nothing about it, except that they make with all this a *ratalouille* of the devil; for you can smell, in passing on the staircase, an odour of sulphur, and charcoal, and melted tin; and then you can hear them blow, blow, blow, like blacksmiths. Certain it is that the Mère Burette prospers either by her fortune-telling or magic; at least, that is what M. César Bradamanté told me, the lodger on the third floor. He is a learned individual, this M. César. When I say individual, I mean Italian, although he speaks French as well as you and I do, only he has a good deal of accent; but never mind, he is a nice man, who knows the simples, and who will take out your teeth, not for money, but for the honour. Yes, monsieur, for pure honour. If you have six bad teeth, he says it himself, to whoever will hear him, he will take out the first five for nothing; you must only pay for the sixth. It is not his fault if you only have the sixth."

"It is very generous."

"He sells, besides, a very good liquid, which keeps the hair from falling out, cures weakness of the eyes, corns on your feet, weakness of the stomach, and destroys rats without arsenic."

"This same liquid which cures weakness of the stomach?"

"The very same."

"It destroys rats also!"

"Without fail; because what is very wholesome for man is unwholesome for beasts."

"True, Madame Pipelet; I did not think of that."

"And the proof that it is a good liquid is, that it is made from simples that M. César collected in the mountains of Lebanon, among a tribe of a kind of Americans who live there, and from whence also he has brought his horse, which looks so much like a tiger; he is all white, with brown spots. I tell you, when M. César Bradamanté mounts this beast, in his red dress, lined with yellow, and his hat and feathers, you'd pay to see him; for, speaking with respect, he looks like Judas Iscariot, with his long red beard. For a month past, he has hired the son of M. Bras Rouge, the little Tortillard, whom he has dressed like a troubadour, with a black cap and an apricot-coloured jacket and collar. He beats the drum to attract customers around M. César; and, besides this, he takes care of the tiger horse of the dentist."

"It seems to me that the son of the principal tenant has a very modest employment."

"His father says he wishes this child to be held with a taught rein, otherwise he will dance on the scaffold; and truly it is a most wicked imp—wicked! He has played more than one trick on this poor M. César Bradamanté, who is the cream of honest people. Since he cured Alfred of the rheumatism we like him much. Well! monsieur, there are some persons ill-natured enough for—but no—it would make the hair raise on your head! Alfred says if it was true, it is a galley offence."

"Well?" "Ah! I dare not: I never shall dare to."

"Don't say another word." "It is on the faith of an honest woman to say that to a young man."

"Let us talk no more about it, Madame Pipelet."

"Yet, as you are to be a lodger, it is better that you should be advised that they are falsehoods. You are in a position to become a friend and neighbour of M. César; if you believe these stories, you would look upon his acquaintance with disgust."

"Speak; I listen to you."

"They do say when—when once a young person has committed a fault—you understand, don't you? and the consequences are feared—"

"Well?" "Stop, I declare I can't tell any more." "But again." "No, no; and besides it is a malicious report." "Go on." "Lies." "Go on." "Slander." "But again." "People who are envious of the tiger horse of M. César." "Very well; but what do they say?" "I am ashamed to tell."

"But what relation is there between a young person who has committed a fault and the quack?"

"I don't say that it is true." "But in the name of Heaven, what then?" cried Rodolphe, becoming impatient at the shuffling of Madame Pipelet.

"Listen, young man," continued the "portière," in a solemn manner; "you must swear to me on your honour that you will never repeat this to any one?"

"When I know what it is, I will tell you, yes or no, to this oath."

"If I tell you this, it is not on account of the

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six francs you have promised me, nor on account of the cassia."

"Well, well." "It is on account of the great confidence I have in you." "Well." "And to serve this poor M. César Bradamanté in exculpating him."

"Your intentions are excellent, I don't doubt it; well?"

"It is said, then—but this must not go out of the lodge, at least." "Certainly: it is said, then—"

"Once more, I say, I dare not; but stop; I'll whisper it in your ear; it will have less effect. What a child I am!" And the old woman whispered some words in the ear of Rodolphe, who shuddered with affright.

"Oh! but this is horrible," cried he, rising by an involuntary movement, and looking around him with terror, as if the house had been accursed.

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" murmured he, in a low voice; "are they possible—such horrid crimes! and this hideous old woman, who is almost indifferent to the dreadful revelation she has just made!"

The portière did not hear Rodolphe, but went on, continuing to occupy herself with her household affairs.

"Is it not a heap of slanders? What! a man who has cured Alfred of the rheumatism, a man who has brought a spotted horse from Lebanon, a man who proposes to take out five teeth gratis is provided you pay for the sixth, a man who has certificates from all parts of Europe, and pays his rent to a farthing. Ah, well, yes; rather die than believe that!"

During the time that Madame Pipelet manifested her indignation against the calumniators, Rodolphe recalled to his mind the letter addressed to this man. An involuntary presentiment told him that these atrocious rumours were well founded.

"Ah, here is Alfred!" cried the "portière;" "he will tell you, as I do, that they are slanders who accuse him of such horrors, this poor M. César Bradamanté, who cured him of the rheumatism."

CHAPTER VII.

MONSIEUR PIPELET.

We recall to our readers' recollection that these events occurred in 1838.

M. Pipelet entered the lodge with a grave and majestic air. He was about sixty years of age, with an enormous nose, a respectable "embonpoint," a large face, shaped and coloured like a pair of nutcrackers of the Nuremberg pattern. This strange-looking head was covered with a "chapeau tromblou," with a broad brim, and red from age.

Alfred, who never went without this hat, any more than his wife went without her fantastic periwig, strutted about in an old green coat with immensely long skirts, the facings of which looked almost gray, so much were they covered with stains and dirt. Notwithstanding his "chapeau tromblou" and his green coat, which gave him a certain air of dignity, M. Pipelet had not laid aside the emblem of his calling. An apron of leather half concealed a long waistcoat, variegated with as many colours as the harlequin counterpane of Madame Pipelet. The saluta-

* These are made shaped like a little man.

tion that the porter made to Rodolphe was not wanting in a certain affability; but, alas! the smile of this man was bitter.

An expression of profound melancholy could be traced there, as Madame Pipelet had said to Rodolphe.

"Alfred, monsieur is an applicant for the chamber and cabinet of the fourth," said Madame Pipelet, presenting Rodolphe to her husband, "and we have only waited for you to drink a bottle of cassis, which he has ordered."

This delicate attention inspired M. Pipelet with confidence in Rodolphe; the porter carried his hand to the front part of his hat, and said in a bass voice, worthy of a cathedral chorister,

"We will satisfy you, monsieur, as porters, in the same way that you satisfy us as lodger; those who resemble assemble—at least, monsieur, if you are not a painter?"

"No; I am a shopkeeper's clerk."

"Then, monsieur, I tender you my humble duties. I felicitate nature for not having placed you on a level with these monsters of artists!"

"Artists! monsters?" asked Rodolphe. M. Pipelet, instead of answering, lifted his two hands towards the ceiling of the lodge, and uttered a sort of angry moan.

"These are the people that have poisoned the life of Alfred; who have rendered him so melancholy," whispered Madame Pipelet to Rodolphe. Then, speaking loud and in a careless manner, she said, "Come, Alfred, be reasonable; don't think about that blackguard; you'll make yourself sick; you won't be able to eat any dinner."

"No; I will have courage and reason," answered M. Pipelet, with a resigned and sorrowful dignity. "He has done me much harm; he has been my persecutor, my executioner, for a long time; but now I despise him. Painters!" added he, turning to Rodolphe, "oh! monsieur, they are the pest of a house; they are its 'bachanal,' its ruin."

"You have had a painter for a lodger?"

"Alas! yes, monsieur; we had one!" said M. Pipelet, with bitterness, "a painter who called himself Cabrion!" At this recollection, notwithstanding his apparent moderation, the porter clinched his fists convulsively.

"Was this the last person who occupied the room that I am about to hire?" asked Rodolphe.

"No, no; the last lodger was a good, worthy young man, called M. Germain; but before him was this Cabrion. Ah! monsieur, since his departure, this Cabrion has almost made me mad, so stupid."

"Did you regret him so much?" asked Rodolphe.

"Cabrion! regret!" answered the porter, in a stupor; "regret Cabrion! Why, now, just imagine, monsieur, that M. Bras-Rouge paid him two terms to get him away; for we had been unfortunate enough to give him a lease. What a wretch! You can have no idea, monsieur,

the horrible jokes he played to us, and to the other occupants. To speak but of one of these jokes, there is not a wind instrument of any description that he has not most basely made his accomplice to demoralize the lodgers! Yes, monsieur, from the hunting-horn to the serpent, monsieur! he has abused with all, pushing his villany so far as to play false, and to blow one note for hours together. Oh, it was enough to make one crazy. There were more than twenty petitions sent to M. Bras-Rouge, that he

should turn the wretch out. Finally, monsieur, they got rid of him by paying two terms. It is droll, is it not? a lodger to whom one pays terms! But they'd have paid him three to shake him off. He went! Perhaps you think we are done with Cabrion? You shall see! The next evening at eleven o'clock I had gone to bed. Pan! pan! pan! I drew the cord. Some one came to the lodge. 'Good-evening, porter,' said a voice; 'will you give me a lock of your hair, if you please?' My wife said to me, 'It is some one who has mistaken the door.' I answered the unknown: 'It is not here; ask next door.' 'Yes, an't this No. 17? The porter's name Pipelet?' asked the voice. 'Yes,' I said, 'my name is Pipelet.' 'Well! Pipelet, my friend, I have come to ask for a lock of your hair for Cabrion; it is a notion he has got; he sticks to it, he will have it.'"

M. Pipelet looked at Rodolphe, letting his head fall, and crossing his arms in a sculptural attitude.

"You comprehend, monsieur? It is to me, his mortal enemy, whom he had covered with outrages, that he impudently comes and demands a lock of my hair, a favour that even ladies often refuse to their well-beloved."

"Yet if this Cabrion had been as good a lodger as M. Germain, perhaps—" said Rodolphe, with great gravity.

"Even if he had, I would not have granted him the lock," said the man with a "chapeau tromblou," majestically; "it is neither according to my principles nor my custom; but I should have made it my duty, my law, to refuse him politely."

"And this is not all," said the portière; "just figure to yourself, monsieur, that since that day, morning, noon, and night, at all hours, this frightful Cabrion set on a host of ruffians, who came one after the other, to ask Alfred for a lock of his hair, always for Cabrion." "And do you think I granted it?" said M. Pipelet, with a determined air; "they should have dragged me to the scaffold sooner, monsieur! After three or four months' obstinacy on their part, and resistance on mine, my energy triumphed over the brutality of these wretches. They saw they were attacking a bar of iron, and they were forced to renounce their insolent pretensions. But it is all the same, monsieur; I have been wounded here!" (Alfred laid his hand upon his heart.) "If I had committed a horrid crime, I could not have had a more tortured sleep. At each moment I awoke, starting, thinking I heard the voice of the cursed Cabrion. I was suspicious of the whole world; in every one I saw an enemy; I lost my amenity. I could not see a strange face at my window without shuddering to think it might be one of the band of Cabrion; and besides, moreover, monsieur, even now I am suspicious, 'renfrogné,' gloomy, 'épilogueur,' as a criminal. I fear to cheer myself up with a new acquaintance, from the dread of seeing start up some of the band of Cabrion; I have no enjoyment for anything."

Here Madame Pipelet carried her finger to her left eye, as if to chase away a tear, and made an affirmative sign with her head.

Alfred continued in a tone more and more sorrowful. "In fine, I am shrivelling up; and it is thus I see flow the river of life. Was I wrong, monsieur, to tell you that this infernal Cabrion had poisoned my existence?" And M. Pipelet, breathing a profound sigh, bent his "cha-

"peau tromblou" under the weight of this immense misfortune.

"I conceive, now, that you cannot like painters," said Rodolphe; "but this M. Germain at least, of whom you have spoken, must have made amends for M. Cabrion?"

"Oh! yes, monsieur; he is a good and worthy young man, true as gold, ready to serve one, not proud and gay, but the right kind of gayety, which does harm to no one, instead of being insolent and jeering, like this Cabrion, whom the devil confound!"

"Come, calm yourself, my dear M. Pipelet; don't pronounce that name. And now, who is the proprietor so happy as to possess this jewel of a lodger, M. Germain?"

"Neither seen nor known; nobody knows, nor will know, where, at this moment, lives M. Germain. When I say nobody—except Mademoiselle Rigolette."

"And who is Mademoiselle Rigolette?" asked Rodolphe.

"A little seamstress; the other lodger on the fourth story," said Madame Pipelet. "Here is another jewel! paying her term in advance; and so neat in her little room, and so good to everybody, and so gay—a true bird of heaven, so joyous, so lively; and, with all that, industrious as a little beaver, earning sometimes as much as two francs a day; but, forsooth! with much—"

"But how is it that Mademoiselle Rigolette alone knows the residence of M. Germain?"

"When he left the house," said Madame Pipelet, "he said to us, 'I don't expect any letters; but if by chance any should arrive, you will give them to Mademoiselle Rigolette;' and in that she was worthy of his confidence, even if the letter was charged; and she, Alfred?"

"The fact is, there is absolutely nothing to say against Mademoiselle Rigolette," said the porter, severely, "if she had not had the weakness to suffer herself to be cajoled by that infamous Cabrion."

"However that may be, Alfred," continued the portière, "you know how well it was no fault of Mademoiselle Rigolette; that comes from the locality; for it was just the same with the travelling clerk who occupied the room before Cabrion as it was after this wicked painter with M. Germain, who cajoled her. Once more I say, it cannot be otherwise; it comes from the locality."

"Thus," said Rodolphe, "the occupants of the chamber that I wish to hire necessarily pay their court to Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Necessarily, monsieur; you can easily comprehend it. You are a neighbour of Mademoiselle Rigolette; the two rooms join. Well, among young folks there is a candle to be lighted, a little coal to borrow, or perhaps some water. Oh, as to water, you are sure to find plenty at Mademoiselle Rigolette's; she is never without it; it is one of her luxuries; she is a real little duck. As soon as she has a moment's leisure she is right at washing her floor and hearth. Thus it is always so neat and clean; you'll see."

"So, M. Germain, in consequence of his locality, has been, as you say, a good neighbour with Mademoiselle Rigolette?"

"Yes, monsieur; you might say they were born for each other. So good, so young, it was a real pleasure to see them come down stairs on Sunday, the only holiday for these poor children, she dressed in a pretty bonnet and robe at

twenty-five sous the 'aune,' which she made herself, but which fit her like a little queen; he looking like a real beau!"

"And M. Germain has never seen Mademoiselle Rigolette since he has left this house?"

"No, monsieur; unless it might have been on a Sunday, for on other days Mademoiselle Rigolette has no time to think of sweethearts, I tell you! she gets up at five or six o'clock, and works until ten, sometimes eleven, at night; she never leaves her room except in the morning when she goes to buy food for herself and her two canary birds; and the three don't want much, I tell you! Let's see? two sous for milk, a little bread, some chick-weed, sallad, millet, and fine, clear water; this does not prevent them from chattering and chirping, all three of them, the little girl and her birds; oh, it is a benediction! With all this, good and charitable as in her power; that is to say, with her time, sleep, and assistance; for, in working sometimes more than twelve hours a day, she just earns enough to live. Now, only think, those poor unfortunates in the garret that M. Bras-Rouge will put out on the pavement in three or four days, Mademoiselle Rigolette and M. Germain have set up with their children for several nights!"

"There is, then, an unfortunate family here?"

"Unfortunate, monsieur! 'Dieu de Dieu,' I think so. Five small children, the mother in bed, almost dying, the grandmother an idiot; and to feed all these, a man who does not have even bread enough, although he works like a negro, for he is a famous workman! Three hours' sleep out of the twenty-four is all he takes; and then, what sleep! when one is awakened by children who cry for bread; by a sick wife who is groaning on her straw bed; or by the old idiot, who sometimes begins to howl like a wolf, with hunger also, for she has no more reason than a beast. When she is very hungry, you can hear her on the staircase—she roars."

"Ah! this is frightful!" cried Rodolphe; "and does no one succour them?"

"Marry! monsieur, one does what can be done among poor people. Since the commandant has given me twelve francs a month to take care of his room, I make soup once a week, and these poor folks always have taste. Mademoiselle Rigolette sits up at night, and, marry! that always costs light, to make, with shreds of stuff, caps and jackets for the little ones. This poor M. Germain, who hadn't much to spare neither, pretended to receive now and then a bottle of wine; and Morel (it is his name) drank one or two glasses, which warmed him famously, and for the time raised his spirits."

"And did the quack do anything for these poor people?"

"M. Bradamantié?" asked the portière.

"He cured me of my rheumatism, it is true; I am grateful; but since that day I said to my wife, 'Anastasia, M. Bradamantié'—Hum! hum! didn't I say so, Anastasia?"

"It is true, you did say so: but he likes to laugh, 'this man,' at least after his manner; for he doesn't open his teeth when he does it."

"What did he do?"

"Well, now see, monsieur: when I spoke to him of the misery of the Morels, because he complained to me that the old idiot had howled with hunger all night, and had prevented him from sleeping, he said, 'Since they are so unfortunate, if they have any teeth to pull, I will not make them pay for the sixth; and, besides, I

will give them a bottle of my lotion at half price."

"*Well!*" cried M. Pipelet, "although he has cured me of my rheumatism, I maintain that is indecent pleasantry. But he always acts so; and, besides, if they were only indecent."

"Only think, Alfred, he is an Italian; and this is, perhaps, the way they joke in his country."

"Decidedly, Madame Pipelet," said Rodolphe, "I have a bad opinion of this man. I will not have any acquaintance with him. And the pawnbroker, has she been any more charitable?"

"Hum! after the manner of M. Bradamanté, she loaned them on their poor clothes. Everything went into her hands, even their last mattress! No great embezzlement; they never had but two."

"And now she does not help them?"

"The Mère Burette? Ah! well, yes. She is as mean in her way as her lover is in his; for, look here! M. Bras-Rouge and the Mère Burette," added the portiere, with a winking of the eye and shaking of the head extraordinarily malicious. "Truly?" said Rodolphe.

"I believe it, to the death! And go along! The summers of Saint Martin's are as warm as any others; ain't it so, old darling?"

M. Pipelet, for answer, shook his "chapeau tromblou" in a melancholy manner.

Since Madame Pipelet had shown a sentiment of charity on account of the poor wretches of the garret, she seemed less repugnant to Rodolphe. "And what trade does the poor workman follow?"

"Workman in false jewels; he works by the piece. You'll see all; a man is but a man; he can only do what he can do; ain't it so? And when there are seven mouths to fill without counting one's own, it is a dead drag; and, besides, his eldest daughter does what she can; but it is not much!"

"And how old is this daughter?"

"Seventeen, and beautiful, beautiful as daylight; she is a servant to an old miser, rich enough to buy all Paris—a notary, M. Jacques Ferrand."

"M. Jacques Ferrand?" said Rodolphe, astonished at this encounter, for it was at this notary's, or, at least, from his housekeeper, that he was to seek information respecting the friends of La Goualeuse. "M. Jacques Ferrand, who lives in the Rue du Sentier?" continued he.

"Exactly so! Do you know him?"

"He is the notary of the commercial house to which I belong."

"Ah well! then you must know that he is a famous miser; but to be just, honest, and devout—every Sunday to mass and vespers, taking communion and going to confession. If he does frolic, it is only with the priests, drinking holy water and eating holy bread—a holy man!—the saving's bank for poor people, who deposit their economies in his hands; but, 'dame,' miserly, and as tough for others as for himself. It is now eighteen months since this poor Louise is his servant. She is a lamb in disposition, but a horse for work. She does everything, and eighteen francs is all she gets—not a cent more or less; she keeps six francs for her own support, and gives the rest to her family; she always does so; but what is that for seven persons to gnaw on!"

"But the father's labour—if he is industrious?"

"If he is industrious! He is a man that has never been drunk; correct, quiet as a lamb; who only prays the 'bon Dieu' to make the days forty-eight hours long, so that he can get a little more bread for his brats."

"His labour produces so little, then?"

"He kept his bed for three months; that's what got him behindhand; his wife ruined her own health in attending him, and at this moment she is in a dying condition; during these three months they had to live on the twelve francs of Louise, and on what they pawned with Mère Burette, and also some 'écus' lent them by the 'courtiers'* in mock jewelry, for whom he worked. But eight people! I always think of that; and if you could see their den! But stop, nonsense, don't let's talk any more about this; our dinner is ready, and only to think of that garret; it turns my stomach. Happily, M. Bras-Rouge is going to rid the house of them. When I say happily, it is not from hard-heartedness, at least. But, if they must be wretched, these poor Morels, and we can't do anything to help them, let them go and be wretched somewhere else. It will be a heart-ache the less for us."

"But if they are turned away from here, where will they go?"

"Marry, I don't know."

"And how much can he earn a day, this poor workman?"

"If he was not obliged to take care of his mother, his wife, and children, he would earn perhaps four to five francs; but as he loses three quarters of his time, at the very most he makes but forty sous."

"Truly, little enough. Poor people!"

"Yes, poor people, 'allez!' it is well said. But there are so many poor people, that when one can do nothing, they must comfort themselves; ain't it so, Alfred? But speaking of comfort and the 'cassis,' we haven't said a word to it!"

"Frankly, Madame Pipelet, what you have told me has touched my heart; you must drink my health with M. Pipelet!"

"You are very kind, monsieur," said the porter; "but do you wish to see the room."

"Yes; if it suits me I'll take it."

The porter came out of his "antre," and Rodolphe followed him.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOUR FLOORS.

THE dark and humid staircase appeared still more obscure on this gloomy winter's day. The entrance to each apartment of this house presented, to the eye of an observer, a most distinct and different appearance. Thus, the door which opened into the rooms of the commandant was freshly painted a brown colour, in imitation of satin wood; a gilt handle shone at the lock, and a fine bell-rope, with a crimson silk tassel, made a strange contrast with the dirty and ancient walls. The door of the second floor, which was occupied by the pawnbroker and fortune-teller, presented a still more singular appearance: a stuffed owl, a bird supremely symbolical and cabalistic, was nailed by the feet and wings over the doorway; a little window, strongly grated with wire, allowed the visitors to be reconnoitred before opening the door. The apartment of

* A female broker or agent.

the Italian quack was also distinguished by its singular entrance. His name, traced with horses' teeth on a black ground, was fastened against the door. Instead of terminating in a classical manner, with a deer's foot, the bellrope was fastened to the arm and paw of a dried monkey. This withered arm, this little hand, with its fine outstretched fingers, was hideous to behold. It looked like a child's.

As Rodolphe passed before this door, which to him had a mysterious look, he thought he heard stifled sobs; then all at once burst forth a sad, convulsive, horrible cry—a cry that appeared to be wrung from the heart resounded throughout the quiet house.

Rodolphe shuddered. With a movement quicker than thought, he ran to the door and pulled the bell violently.

"What is the matter with you, monsieur?" said the surprised porter. "That cry!" said Rodolphe, "did you not hear it?" "Yes, monsieur. No doubt it is some patient from whom M. César Bradamanté is pulling a tooth—perhaps two."

This explanation was probable; yet it did not satisfy Rodolphe. This terrible cry, which he had just heard, did not seem to him only an exclamation of physical suffering, but also, if it may be said, "a cry of moral suffering." His pull at the bell had been of great force; at first it was not answered. Then many doors were shut with violence; and behind the glass of an "œil-de-boeuf," placed near the door, on which Rodolphe had mechanically fixed his eye, a thin face of ghastly paleness appeared; an immense mass of red and gray hair crowned this hideous visage, which was terminated by a long beard of the same colour. This vision disappeared at the end of a second. Rodolphe remained petrified. While this apparition appeared, he thought he had some remembrance of such a face.

Those green eyes sparkling like emeralds under their heavy, bristling, and red eyebrows; that livid paleness, that thin nose, prominent and curved like the beak of an eagle, with wide and distended nostrils, all recalled to his mind a certain Abbé Polidori, whose name had been cursed by Murphy during his conversation with the Baron de Graün.

Although Rodolphe had not seen the Abbé Polidori for sixteen or seventeen years, he had a thousand reasons for not forgetting him; but that which rather puzzled him, which made him rather doubt the identity of these two personages, was, that the priest whom he thought he had found under the disguise of this quack, was of very dark hair and complexion.

If Rodolphe (in supposing that his suspicions were well founded) was not much astonished to see a man invested with a holy calling, whose high intelligence, vast learning, rare mind he perfectly knew, fallen to this point of degradation, perhaps of infamy, it is that he knew that this high intelligence, this vast learning, were allied to a perversity so profound, conduct so disorderly, habits so intemperate, and, above all, such impudent quackery and outrageous contempt of men and things, that this man, reduced to merited misery, must have, we had almost said, ought to have, sought out resources the least honourable, and found a sort of ironical and unholly satisfaction to see himself (when himself, really distinguished by gifts of the mind and clothed with a sacred calling) exercising the vile trade of an impudent mountebank. But

we repeat, that although he had last seen the Abbé Polidori in the flower of his days, and that he should now be about the age of the quack, yet there was between these two personages such a notable difference, that Rodolphe doubted extremely their identity; nevertheless, he said to M. Pipelet, "How long is it since M. Bradamanté came to live in this house?" "About one year, monsieur. Yes, about that; he came for the January term. He is a very punctual lodger; he has cured me of a famous rheumatism. But, as I told you just now, he has a fault: he is too much of a 'goutaileut'; he respects no one in his conversation." "How is that?" "In fine, monsieur," said M. Pipelet, gravely, "I am not a rose-bud, but there is too much joking." "He is very gay then?" "It is not that he is so very gay; on the contrary, he looks like a dead man. But he never laughs in his mouth; he laughs always in his words; for him, he respects no one, father nor mother, the 'bon Dieu' nor the devil: he jokes about all—even about his own lot, monsieur—even about his own lot! But I cannot conceal from you that these jokes sometimes make me afraid—make me creep all over. After he has jabbered indecently for a quarter of an hour in the lodge about the women, half clothed, of the different countries he has travelled through, and I find myself alone with Anastasia, well! monsieur, I, who have for thirty-seven years been accustomed to make it a law to cherish her—Anastasia—well! it seems to me that I cherish her less. You will laugh; but sometimes again, when M. César has departed, after having talked about the festivals of princes, where he has been present, to see them try the teeth he has made, well! it seems that my food is bitter—I have no more hunger. However, I love my trade, monsieur, and I pride myself on it—I might have been a boot maker if such had been my ambition; but I think I render as much service by mending old ones—well! monsieur, there are some days when this devil of a M. César, with his jokes, makes me regret that I am not a maker instead of a mender, on my word and honour. And then, besides, he has such a way of talking about these lady savages that he has known—now look here, monsieur, I repeat to you, I am not a rose-bud, but sometimes, 'saperlotte!' I blush like a girl," added M. Pipelet, with an air of revolted chastity. "And does Madame Pipelet tolerate this?" "Anastasia is a giddy creature; and M. César, notwithstanding his 'mauvais ton,' has, certainly, too much: so she passes it all over." "She has told me of certain rumours." "She has told you?" "Be quite easy; I am discreet." "Well, monsieur, that rumour I don't believe, never will believe it; and yet I can't keep from thinking about it; and that augments the singular effects of the droll jokes of M. Bradamanté: in fine, monsieur, in a word, I certainly hate M. Cabrion: it is a hatred that I shall carry to the tomb. Well! sometimes it appears to me that I prefer the ignoble farces that he had the effrontery to play in this house, to the jokes M. César favours us with, in his *pinch-without-laughing* manner, in bridling his lips with a disagreeable movement, which always creates to my mind the death-bed of my uncle Piousselot, who, with the rattles in his throat, bit his lips just like M. Bradamanté."

Some words of M. Pipelet, on the perpetual sneer with which the quack spoke of all and everybody, and branded joys the most pure and

modest with his infamous jeering, quite confirmed the first suspicions of Rodolphe; for the abbé, when he threw off his mask of hypocrisy, had always affected a skepticism the most audacious and the most revolting. Quite decided to clear up his doubts, the presence of this priest in this house troubling him, and feeling more and more disposed to interpret this terrible cry differently from the porter, he followed him to the floor above, where he found the room he wished to hire.

The dwelling place of Mademoiselle Rigolette, next to this chamber, was easily to be recognised, thanks to a charming gallantry of the painter, the mortal enemy of M. Pipelet. A half dozen chubby-cheeked little loves, very prettily and neatly painted in the style of Wateau, were grouped around a kind of work box, and bore, allegorically, one a thimble, another a pair of scissors; this one a smoothing iron, that one a small mirror. In the middle of the box, on a clear blue ground, was written in rose-coloured letters, *Mademoiselle Rigolette, mantua-maker*. The whole was enclosed by a garland of flowers, which stood out in bold relief with the sea-green colour of the door. This little affair was very pretty, and formed a striking contrast to the black staircase. At the risk of irritating the bleeding wounds of Alfred, Rodolphe said to him, pointing to the door of Mlle. Rigolette, "This, without doubt, is the work of M. Cabrion?" "Yes, monsieur; he took the liberty of spoiling the paint of this door with these indecent daubings of naked children, which he calls loves. If it had not been for the entreaties of Mlle. Rigolette and the weakness of M. Bras-Rouge, I would have scratched it all off, as well as this palette with which the same monster has obstructed the door of your chamber." And truly, a palette charged with colours, appearing to be suspended to a nail, was painted on the door, so as to be quite deceptive. Rodolphe followed the porter into this room, of sufficient size, preceded by a cabinet, and lighted by two windows which looked into the Rue du Temple; some fantastic sketches, painted on the second door, had been scrupulously respected by M. Germain.

Rodolphe had too many reasons for occupying this room, not to engage it at once; he gave then, modestly, forty sous to the porter, and said, "This chamber suits me perfectly; here is the advance; to-morrow I shall send some furniture; I suppose it is not necessary that I should see the principal tenant, M. Bras-Rouge?"

"No, monsieur; he only comes here from time to time, except for his dealings with Mère Burette. It is always with me that this is arranged; I shall only ask you your name."

"Rodolphe." "Rodolphe what?"

"Rodolphe; nothing else, Monsieur Pipelet."

"That's indifferent, monsieur; it is not for curiosity I insisted: names and inclinations are independent."

"Tell me, Monsieur Pipelet, ought I not to-morrow, as a new neighbour, go and ask the Morels if I can be of any service to them, since my predecessor, M. Germain, assisted them according to his means?" "Yes, monsieur, you can do that; it is true, it will be of no great service to them, notwithstanding." Then, as if struck with a sudden idea, M. Pipelet cried, looking at his companion in a very cunning manner, "I understand, I comprehend; it is a commencement which will end in your playing the good neighbour to the little neighbour alongside." "But I certainly do count on it!"

"There's no harm, monsieur; it is the custom; and stop, I am sure that Mlle. Rigolette has heard that some one was looking at the apartment, and that she is on the watch to see us go down. I'll make a noise on purpose, when I turn the key; look sharp as you pass along."

In effect, Rodolphe perceived that the door, so prettily embellished with the little "amours," was ajar, and he saw indistinctly, through the narrow opening, the rosy end of a little turned-up nose, and a large black eye, sparkling and curious; but as he slackened his pace, the door was shut quickly.

"Now I told you that she was watching us," continued the porter; then he added, "Pardon, excuse me, monsieur, I am going to my little observatory."

"What is that?" "At the top of the ladder is the landing-place on which opens the door of Morel's garret; and behind the wainscot there is a little black hole where I keep some rubbish. As the wall is very much cracked, when I am in my hole I can see and hear them just as if I was in the room. It is not as a spy; just heavens! But I go to look at them sometimes, just as one goes to see a bloody melo-drame, and when I descend to my lodge, I find it like a palace. But say now, monsieur, if your heart will permit, would you like to—before they go? It is very sad, but it is curious; for when they see you, they are like savages—it annoys them."

"You are very good, Monsieur Pipelet; another day, to-morrow, perhaps, I will profit by your offer."

"At your convenience, monsieur; but I must go up to my observatory, for I have need of a piece of leather. If you wish to go down I will rejoin you." And M. Pipelet began to ascend the ladder, an undertaking sufficiently perilous at his age.

Rodolphe cast a parting glance at the door of Mlle. Rigolette, thinking that this young girl, the former companion of the poor Goualeuse, knew, without doubt, the retreat of the son of the Maître d'Ecole, when he heard in the lower story some one come out of the quack's room; he recognised the light step of a woman, and distinguished the rustling of a silk dress. For a moment he stopped, for discretion's sake, and then, hearing nothing farther, descended. When he reached the second floor, he picked up a handkerchief on the last steps, belonging, no doubt, to the person who had just left the apartment of M. Bradamanté. Rodolphe approached one of the narrow windows which lighted the staircase, and examined this handkerchief, magnificently trimmed with costly lace; in one of the corners was embroidered an L. and an N., surmounted with a ducal coronet. This handkerchief was literally soaked with tears. The first thought of Rodolphe was to hasten that he might deliver it to the person who had lost it; but he reflected that this might be considered, under the circumstances, an inconvenient curiosity; he kept it, thus finding himself, without wishing it, on the trace of a mysterious, and, without doubt, sinister adventure. When he reached the lodge, he said to the portière,

"Wasn't there a woman who came down stairs just now?"

"No, monsieur. It was a fine lady, tall and slender, in a black veil. She came out of M. César's. The little Tortillard went to get a hack, which she got into. What astonishes me is, that

The little rascal got up behind the carriage, perhaps to see where the lady goes to; for he is as curious as a magpie, and quick as a ferret, notwithstanding his lame foot."

"Thus," thought Rodolphe, "the name and address of this woman will be known by the quack, if he has ordered Tortillard to follow the unknown."

"Well, monsieur, does the room suit you?" asked the portière.

"It suits me exactly; I have taken it, and to-morrow I will send some furniture." "May the 'bon Dieu' bless you for having passed before our door, monsieur! we shall have one famous lodger the more. You, like a good boy, Pipelet will love you at once. You will make him laugh like M. Germain, who always had something funny to tell him, for he likes a laugh, the poor dear man; thus, I think before a month is passed, you will make a pair of friends." "Come, come, Madame Pipelet, you flatter me." "Not at all; what I say to you now is as if I opened my heart to you. And if you are kind to Alfred, I shall be grateful: you shall see your little room; I am a lion for neatness; and if you wish to dine at home on Sundays, I'll cook you up a dish that'll make you lick your fingers." "Agreed; Madame Pipelet, you shall take care of my room. To-morrow they will bring you some furniture, and I'll come and see it put in order."

Rodolphe took his departure. The results of his visit to the house of the Rue du Temple were sufficiently important for the solution of the mystery which he wished to discover, and for the noble curiosity with which he sought the occasion to do good, and to prevent evil. Such were these results.

Mademoiselle Rigolette necessarily knew the residence of François Germain. A young woman, who, according to some indications, might unfortunately be the Marchioness d'Harville, had given to the commandant a new rendezvous, which would perhaps ruin her forever. And for a thousand reasons, Rodolphe had the most lively interest in M. d'Harville, whose repose and honour seemed so cruelly compromised. An honest and laborious artisan, crushed by the most fearful misery, was about to be, he and his family, turned into the street by the orders of M. Bras-Rouge.

Finally, Rodolphe had involuntarily discovered some traces of an adventure, of which the quack César Bradamanté (perhaps the Abbé Polidore) and a woman who belonged, without doubt, to the highest circles, were the principal actors. Besides, La Chouette, recently discharged from the hospital, where she had been sent after the affair of the Allée des Veuves, had some private dealings with Madame Burette, pawnbroker and fortune-teller, who occupied the second floor of the mansion. Having collected this varied information, Rodolphe returned to his own house, Rue Plumet, putting off to the next day his visit to the notary, Jacques Ferrand. The same evening, as the reader knows, Rodolphe was to go to a grand ball at the Embassy of * * *.

Before we follow our hero in this new excursion, we will cast a retrospective glance on Tom and Sarah, important personages in this history.

CHAPTER IX.

TOM AND SARAH.

SARAH SETTON, at that time widow of the Count M'Gregor, and about thirty-seven years of age, was of an excellent Scotch family, and daughter of a baronet.

Of a finished beauty, orphan at sixteen, Sarah had left Scotland with her brother Tom Seyton, of Halsburg.

The absurd predictions of an old Highlander, her nurse, had aroused to madness the two great faults of Sarah—pride and ambition—in promising her, with an incredible persistence of conviction, the highest destiny—why not say it? the destiny of a sovereign! The young girl lent a willing ear to the predictions of her nurse, and constantly repeated to herself, to corroborate her ambitious folly, that a fortune-teller had also promised a crown to the beautiful and excellent Creole, who was once seated on the throne of France, and who was queen by her charms and goodness, as others are by their grandeur and majesty. Strange thing! Tom Seyton, just as superstitious as his sister, encouraged these foolish hopes, and had resolved to dedicate his life to the realization of Sarah's dream—this dream as dazzling as it was foolish.

Nevertheless, the brother and sister were not blind enough to believe rigorously in the prophecies of the old Scotchwoman, and only to look for a throne of the first rank, in their haughty disdain of secondary royalties, or reigning princes: no, as long as the handsome Scotch girl could place on her imperial brow a sovereign crown, the proud couple would shut their eyes on the possessor of this crown.

With the assistance of the Almanac of Gotha for the year of grace 1819, Tom Seyton, made, just before quitting Scotland, an alphabetical list, with their ages, of all the unmarried kings and sovereign highnesses of Europe. The ambition of the brother and sister was pure of all ignoble means to attain their object; Tom was to assist Sarah in contriving the conjugal plot, by which she hoped to catch a crown. Tom was to be half concerned in all the stratagems, in all the intrigues which might bring about this result; but he would sooner have killed his sister than to have seen her the *chère amie* of a prince, even with the certainty of a marriage of reparation.

The kind of matrimonial inventory which resulted from the researches of Tom and Sarah in the Almanac of Gotha was satisfactory. The Germanic Confederation furnished, above all, a numerous contingency of young presumptive sovereigns. Sarah was a Protestant; Tom was not ignorant of the facility of the left-handed German marriages, marriages otherwise legitimate, and to which he would be resigned for his sister, in the last extremity. It was, then, determined between them that Germany should be the first field of their operations.

If this project appears impossible, these hopes insensate, we answer, that an unbounded ambition, much increased by a superstitious belief, is very rarely reasonable in its views, or staggered by impossibilities; besides, in recalling to mind certain contemporaneous facts from the august and "morganatique" marriages between sovereigns and subjects, to the "amoureuse odyssée" of Miss Penelope Smyth and the Prince of Capua, one cannot but allow some probabilities of success to the views of Tom and Sarah.

We will add, that the latter joined to wonderful beauty great aptitude for the most varied accomplishments, and a power of seduction so much the more dangerous, as, with a hard and selfish heart, a cunning and wicked mind, a profound dissimulation, a determined and wilful disposition, she united all under the appearance of a generous, ardent, and impassioned nature. Her physical organization was quite as deceptive. Her large black eyes, now sparkling, now languishing under her ebony eyebrows, could feign the ardent gaze of the voluptuary, yet the burning aspirations of love never caused her heart to beat in her frozen bosom; no surprise of the heart or the senses ever could derange the merciless calculations of this cunning, egotistic, ambitious woman.

In arriving on the Continent, Sarah, from the counsels of her brother, did not wish to commence her undertaking without first making a visit to Paris, where she desired to finish her education, and to soften down her English roughness, by mixing with the most polished society. She was introduced into the best and most fashionable circles of the "grand monde," thanks to the letters and kind patronage of the English ambassadress and the old Marquis d'Harville, who had known in England the father of Tom and Sarah.

After a sojourn of six months in Paris, Sarah could compete with the Parisienne, the most "Parisienne" in the world, for the "grace piquante" of her mind, the charm of her gayety, and the provoking naïveté of the glance of her eye, the ingenuity of her coquetry, at once chaste and passionné.

Finding his sister sufficiently armed, Tom set out with her for Germany, furnished with excellent letters of introduction.

The first state of the Germanic Confederation which was found on the itinerary of Sarah was the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein, thus designated in the diplomatic and infallible Almanac of Gotha, for the year 1819:

Genealogy of the Sovereigns of Europe and of their Families.

GEROLSTEIN.

Grand-duke MAXIMILIAN RODOLPHE, born the 10th December, 1764. Succeeded his father **CHARLES FREDERIC RODOLPHE**, the 21st April, 1785. Widower, January, 1808, of Louisa, daughter of the Prince JOHN AUGUSTUS, of Burglen.

SON,

GUSTAVUS RODOLPHE, born 17th April, 1803.

MOTHER,

Grand-duchess JUDITH, dowager widow of the **Grand-duke CHARLES FREDERIC RODOLPHE**, the 21st April, 1785.

Tom had sense enough to inscribe first on his list the youngest of the princes whom he desired for his brother-in-law, thinking that extreme youth was more easily seduced than riper age. And, besides, as we have said, Tom and Sarah had been particularly recommended to the reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein by the old Marquis d'Harville, infatuated, like everybody else, with Sarah, whose beauty, grace, and charming manners he never could sufficiently admire.

It is useless to say that the heir-presumptive of the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein was Gustavus Rodolphe; he was scarcely eighteen, when Tom and Sarah were presented to his father.

The arrival of the young Scotch girl was quite an event in this little German court, calm, simple, serious, and thus to speak, patriarchal. The grand-duke, the best of men, governed his state with paternal kindness; nothing could be more materially, more morally happy, than this principality; its population, industrious and sedate, frugal and religious, presented "the type idéal" of the German character.

These good people enjoyed a happiness so profound, they were so completely satisfied with their condition, that the enlightened solicitude of the grand-duke had but little to do to preserve them from the mania of constitutional innovations.

As to modern discoveries, as to practical ideas, which might have a salutary influence on the well-being, and on the morality of the people, the grand-duke kept himself well advised, and applied them immediately, his ministers resident at the different courts of Europe having, as it were, no other mission than to keep their master well advised of the progress of science, in a point of view of public and practical utility.

We have already said that the grand-duke felt as much affection as gratitude for the old Marquis d'Harville; thanks to the letters of this last, Tom and Sarah Seyton, of Halsbury, were received at the court of Gerolstein with a very marked and kind distinction. Fifteen days after her arrival, Sarah, endowed with a profound spirit of observation, had easily penetrated the firm, loyal, and open character of the grand-duke. Before she vanquished the son, an infallible business, she had wisely resolved to assure herself of the disposition of the father, who appeared to love his son so blindly, that for a moment Sarah believed him capable of consenting to a misalliance, rather than see his dear son eternally unhappy. But soon she was convinced that this affectionate parent would never depart from certain principles, certain ideas on the duties of princes. It was not on account of his pride; it was conscience, reason, dignity. Now a man of this energetic temperament, so much the more affectionate and good, as it is firmer and stronger, never accedes to anything that touches his conscience, his reason, his dignity.

Sarah was on the point of renouncing her undertaking, in face of these obstacles almost insurmountable; but reflecting, on the other hand, that Rodolphe was very young, that they praised, generally, his sweetness, his kindness of disposition, his character, at once timid and pensive, she thought the young prince weak and irresolute: so she persisted, then, in her projects and hopes. On this occasion, the conduct of her brother and herself was a model of generalship.

The young girl sought to conciliate everybody, and, above all, those who might be jealous of her advantages; she made her beauty and grace forgotten by the modest simplicity with which she concealed them. Soon she became the idol, not only of the grand-duke, but of his mother the grand-duchess dowager, who, in spite of, or on account of her ninety years, loved all that was young and charming.

Several times Tom and Sarah had spoken of their departure, but never would the sovereign of Gerolstein listen to the proposal; and to keep near him both the brother and sister, he begged the baronet, Tom Seyton, of Halsbury, to accept the vacant situation of first master of the

horse, and he instructed Sarah not to leave the grand-duchess, who could not exist without her. After a long hesitation, combated by the most powerful influence, Tom and Sarah accepted these brilliant propositions, and established themselves at the court of Gerolstein, where they had been about two months.

Sarah, an excellent musician, knowing the taste of the grand-duchess for the old masters, and among others for Gluck, sent for the works of this illustrious man, and fascinated the princess by her inexhaustible "complaisance," and by the remarkable talent with which she sang these old airs, of a beauty so simple and touching.

Tom, on his part, knew how to render himself very useful in the employment the grand-duke had confided to him. The Scotchman was perfectly familiar with horses; he had much method and firmness, and in a short time completely reorganized the service of the stables, a service heretofore much neglected.

The brother and sister were soon equally loved, flattered, and caressed in this court. The preference of the master commanded the secondary preferences. Sarah had, besides, need, for her future projects, of too many "points d'appui" not to employ all her arts to make partisans. Her hypocrisy, clothed in the most attractive garb, easily deceived the most of these loyal Germans, and the general affection of all soon sealed the excessive benevolence of the grand-duke.

And now behold our couple established at the court of Gerolstein, and honourably placed, without, as yet, anything said about Rodolphe. By a lucky chance, some days after the arrival of Sarah, he had set out on a tour of inspection, accompanied by an aid-de-camp and the faithful Murphy. This absence, doubly favourable to the views of Sarah, permitted her to dispose at her ease of the principal threads of the net that she was warping without being restrained by the presence of the young prince, whose admiration, too open, might have awakened the fears of the grand-duke. On the contrary, in the absence of his son, unfortunately he never thought that he had admitted to his intimacy a young girl of rare beauty and charming mind, who naturally would associate with Rodolphe every hour in the day. Sarah remained insensible to this reception so touching so generous, to this noble confidence with which she was introduced to the bosom of this sovereign family. Neither this young girl nor her brother drew back a moment from their evil designs; they came knowingly to bring trouble and sorrow into this peaceable and happy court. They coldly calculated the probable results of the cruel divisions which they were about to sow between a father and son until then tenderly united.

CHAPTER X.

SIR WALTER MURPHY AND THE ABBE POLIDORI.

RODOLPHE during his childhood had been of a very frail constitution. His father reasoned thus, strange in appearance, but in reality very sensible:

The English country gentlemen are generally remarkable for robust health. This advantage is derived from their physical education; plain, rugged, rustic, it develops their strength. Rodolphe will soon be out of the hands of his

nurses; his temperament is delicate; perhaps, in accustoming this child to live like the son of an English farmer (saving some attentions), I shall strengthen his constitution. The grand-duke sent to England for a man worthy and capable to direct this kind of physical education. Sir Walter Murphy, a fine specimen of a Yorkshire country gentleman, was intrusted with this important task. The course he pointed out to the young duke answered perfectly to the views of the father. Murphy and his pupil lived for several years on a small farm, situated in the midst of woods, at some leagues distant from the city of Gerolstein, in a most salubrious and picturesque position. Rodolphe, free from all restraints of etiquette, engaged with Murphy in agricultural pursuits suitable to his age, living a quiet, sober, regular life, having for pleasure and relaxation the manly exercises of the chase, pugilism, hunting, and shooting. In the pure air of the meadows, woods, and mountains, the young prince seemed regenerated, shooting upward like a young oak: the unhealthy pallor of his cheeks gave place to the robust colours of health; although light and slender, yet he always endured the greatest fatigues. By his address, energy, and courage, he was soon able to wrestle, with success, with young men much older than himself; he was then about fifteen or sixteen years of age.

His scientific education naturally was neglected for the physical one. Rodolphe knew but little; but the grand-duke wisely thought that, to expect much from the mind, it was necessary that the mind should be sustained by a strong physical organization; then, although instruction should come late, yet the intellectual faculties would be rapidly developed.

The good Murphy was no scholar; he could only give to Rodolphe some primitive instructions; but no one better than he could inspire a pupil with the consciousness of what was base, ignoble, and contemptible.

This hatred of vice, this energetic and salutary admiration of virtue, took root forever in the bosom of Rodolphe; later, these principles were violently shaken by the storms of passion; but never were they torn from his heart. The thunderbolt strikes and shatters the tree firmly planted, but the sap lives in its roots, and a thousand green branches soon cover the unsightly and withered trunk. Murphy gave, then, to Rodolphe, if it may be said, the health of both body and mind; he made him robust, active, and hardy, sympathetic with that which was great and good, repugnant to that which was wicked and bad.

His task thus admirably fulfilled, the squire, recalled to England by important business, left Germany for some time, to the great regret of Rodolphe, who loved him tenderly.

Murphy had agreed to return and fix himself permanently at Gerolstein, with his family, as soon as he could arrange some important affairs; he hoped not to be absent more than one year. Reassured concerning the health of his son, the grand-duke thought seriously of his future education. A certain Abbé Polidori, a renowned physiologist, distinguished physician, historian, and very learned in the studies of physical and ordinary sciences, was intrusted with the cultivation of this rich, but virgin soil, so perfectly prepared by Murphy.

This time the choice of the grand-duke was unfortunate, or, rather, his religion was cruelly

deceived by the person who presented the abbé to him, and caused him to be accepted; he, a Catholic priest; as a preceptor for a Protestant prince. This innovation was very much disapproved by many, and thought to be of "funeste présage" for the education of Rodolphe. Chance, or, rather, the abominable character of the abbé, realized a part of these sad predictions.

Impious impostor, hypocrite, sacrilegious despoiler of all that is held most sacred among men; full of cunning and address, concealing the most dangerous immorality, the most frightful skepticism, under a pious and austere exterior; exaggerating a false Christian humility to conceal his insinuating suppleness, even so far that he affected an expansive benevolence, an ingenuous optimism to conceal the perversity of his interested flattery; with a profound knowledge of mankind, or, rather, being only experienced in the baser passions of mankind, the Abbé Polidori was the most detestable mentor that could have been given to a young man. Rodolphe, abandoning with extreme regret the independent, animated life which he had led until then, with Murphy, for the ceremonious usages of his father's court, and for musty books, took, at first, the abbé in great aversion. It could hardly be otherwise.

On leaving his pupil, the poor squire had compared him, and not without reason, to a wild young colt, full of grace and vigour, just taken from the prairies, where he had sported free and joyful, to be submitted to the bridle and spur, and to be taught to moderate and use his strength, which, until then, he had employed only to run and bound according to his caprice.

Rodolphe commenced by declaring to the abbé that he felt no inclination to study; that he had, before everything, need of exercising his arms and legs; to breathe the pure air of the fields; to rove over woods and mountains; besides, a good horse and gun seemed to him preferable to all the books in the world.

The priest answered his pupil, that there was in effect, nothing more tiresome than study; but that nothing was more clownish than the pleasures he preferred to study; pleasures entirely worthy of a stupid German farmer; and the abbé drew such a ridiculous picture of this simple and rustic life, that, for the first time, Rodolphe was ashamed to have found it so happy. Then he naively asked the priest how he should pass his time, if he loved neither the chase, study, nor the free life of the country.

The abbé answered him, mysteriously, that he would instruct him by-and-by. Under another point of view the hopes of this priest were as ambitious as those of Sarah. Although the Grand-duchy of Genolstein was only a secondary state, the abbé imagined himself one day become a Richelieu, and Rodolphe playing the part of "Prince Fainéant."

He began then to endeavour to render himself agreeable to his pupil, and to cause him to forget Murphy, by means of his condescension and obsequiousness. Rodolphe continuing to be refractory respecting the cause of science, the abbé concealed from the grand-duke the repugnance of Rodolphe for study; on the contrary, he boasted of his assiduity and his astonishing progress; and some few questions, prepared beforehand between him and Rodolphe, but which seemed altogether accidental, continued the grand-duke (not very learned, it must be avowed) in his blind confidence.

* Idle or lazy.

By degrees the indifference with which the priest had at first inspired Rodolphe changed, on the part of the young prince, to a cavalier familiarity, very different from the serious attachment that he had for Murphy. Soon Rodolphe found himself united to the abbé (although by very innocent causes) by the kind of ties which unite two accomplices. Sooner or later he would despise a man of the character and age of this priest, who could lie so unworthily to excuse the idleness of his pupil. The abbé knew this, but he also knew that, if one did not fly at once from the corruption of corrupt beings, that, in spite of themselves, by degrees they became accustomed to their wit, too often attracting; and that insensibly they arrived at the point of hearing, without shame and indignation, ridiculed and sneered at what before they had held in veneration and respect.

The abbé, besides, was too cunning to attack directly certain noble convictions, fruits of the education of Murphy. After having redoubled his railleries on the vulgarity of the pastimes of his early years, the priest, half laying aside his mask of austerity, had vividly excited his curiosity by a relation of the enchanting life led by princes of a time gone by; finally, ceding to the requests of Rodolphe, after a good deal of management, and many jokes on the ceremonious gravity of the court of the grand-duke, the abbé inflamed the imagination of the young prince by the exaggerated and highly-coloured recitals of the pleasures and gallantries which had illustrated the reigns of Louis XIV., the regent, and, above all, Louis XV., the hero of César Polidori.

He assured this unfortunate boy, who listened to him with fatal avidity, that even excessive voluptuousness, far from demoralizing a prince happily endowed, on the contrary, often rendered him merciful and generous; for this reason, that fine minds are never more predisposed to benevolence and affection than by happiness.

Louis XV., "le bien aimé," was an irrefragable proof of this assertion. "And besides," said the abbé, "how many men of ancient and modern times have largely sacrificed to an epicurism the most refined, from Alcibiades to Maurice de Saxe, from Antony to the great Condé, from Cæsar to Vendôme!"

Such conversations naturally cause frightful ravages in a young, ardent, and sinless soul; besides, the abbé eloquently translated to his pupil the odes of Horace, where this rare genius extolled, with the most irresistible charm, the sweet delights of a life entirely devoted to love and sensuality. However, here and there, to conceal the danger of these theories, and to satisfy the innate purity of Rodolphe's character, the abbé glossed it over as if imaginary, a most charming Utopia.

To have believed him, an intelligent, voluptuous prince could ameliorate the condition of men by pleasure, improve their morals by happiness, and lead the most incredulous to sentiments of religion, in raising their gratitude towards the Creator, who, in the corporeal existence, should load man with enjoyments with an inexhaustible prodigality.

To enjoy all, and always, was, according to the abbé, to glorify God in the magnificence and eternity of his gifts. These theories produced their fruit.

In the midst of this religious and virtuous court, accustomed, from the example of its mas-

ter, to honest pleasures and innocent enjoyments, Rodolphe, instructed by the abbé, already dreamed of the mad revels of Versailles, the orgies of Choisy, the violent voluptuousness of the "Parc-aux-Cerfs," and also, now and then, by way of contrast, of some romantic love. The abbé had not failed to show to Rodolphe that a prince of the Germanic Confederation should have no other military pretensions than to send his contingency to the Diet. Besides, the spirit of the times was no longer for war. To let his days flow deliciously and lazily in the midst of women and the refinements of luxury; to refresh himself occasionally from these pleasures by the delightful recreations of the arts; to seek sometimes in the chase, not as a savage Nimrod, but as an intelligent epicurean, those fatigues which double the chasm of indolence and sloth—such was, according to the abbé, the only possible life for a prince who (what happiness!) could find a prime minister capable of devoting himself courageously to the irksome and heavy burden of the affairs of state.

Rodolphe, in giving way to suppositions which were not at all criminal because they were not without the reach of probabilities, proposed to himself, when God should recall to himself the grand-duke his father, to devote himself to this life, which the Abbé Polidori had painted under such glowing colours, and to take the priest for his prime minister.

We repeat, Rodolphe loved his father tenderly, and he would have profoundly regretted him, although his death would have permitted him to play Sardanapalus on a small scale. It is useless to say that the young prince kept as a profound secret the miserable hopes with which he had been inspired.

Knowing that the favourite heroes of the grand duke were Gustavus Adolphus, Charles XII., and the great Frederic (Maximilian Rodolphe had the honour to be nearly connected with the royal house of Brandebourg), Rodolphe thought, and with reason, that his father, who professed such profound admiration for these king captains, always booted and spurred, riding and fighting, would regard his son as lost if he thought him capable of replacing in his court the Teutonic gravity by the gay and licentious manners of the Regency. A year—eighteen months passed in this way. Murphy had not yet returned, although he announced his speedy arrival. The first repugnance conquered by the obsequiousness of the abbé, Rodolphe profited by the scientific attainments of his preceptor, and acquired, if not a very extensive education, at least a superficial knowledge, which, joined to a naturally quick and sagacious understanding, allowed him to pass for being much better instructed than he really was, and to do the greatest honour to the cares of the abbé.

Murphy returned from England with his family, and wept for joy on embracing his old pupil. At the end of some days, without being able to find out the reason of a change which deeply grieved him, the worthy squire found Rodolphe cold and constrained towards him, and even ironical when he recalled to him their rude and hardy life. Certain of the natural goodness of heart of the young prince, advised by a secret presentiment, Murphy believed him for the moment perverted by the pernicious influence of the abbé, whom he detested from instinct, and whom he promised himself to watch closely.

On his part, the priest, very much vexed at the return of Murphy, whose frankness he dreaded as well as his good sense and penetration; had only one thought, which was to ruin him in the estimation of Rodolphe. It was at this epoch that Tom and Sarah were presented and received at the court of Gerolstein with the most extreme distinction. Sometime before their arrival, Rodolphe had set out with an aide-camp and Murphy to inspect the troops of some of the garrisons. This being entirely a military excursion, the grand-duke had thought it proper that the abbé should remain behind. The priest, to his great regret, saw Murphy assume, for some days, his ancient functions about the young prince. The squire counted much on this occasion to enlighten himself as to the cause of the coolness of Rodolphe. Unfortunately this latter, already proficient in the art of dissimulation, and believing it dangerous to let his ancient mentor penetrate into his projects for the future, evinced the utmost cordiality, feigned to regret sincerely the days of his early youth, and his rural pleasures, and almost completely reassured him.

We say almost, for certain minds are endowed with admirable instincts. Notwithstanding the proofs of affection which the young prince gave him, Murphy had a vague presentiment that there was a secret between them; in vain he wished to clear up his suspicions: his attempts always failed before the precocious duplicity of Rodolphe. During the voyage the abbé had not remained idle. Intriguers divine or recognise certain mysterious signs, which are carefully watched, in order to see whether it is better to join forces or declare war.

Some days after the establishment of Sarah and her brother at the court of the grand-duke, Tom became very intimate with the Abbé Polidori. This priest avowed to himself, with great impudence, that he had a natural, almost involuntary affinity for rogues and scoundrels; thus, he said, without positively finding out the object of Tom and Sarah, he found himself attracted towards them by a sympathy too lively, not to suppose some diabolical design. Some questions of Tom Seyton on the character and former occupations of Rodolphe, questions of no importance to a less suspicious person than the abbé, enlightened him at once as to the views of the brother and sister; only he did not give the young girl credit for views so honest and ambitious. The arrival of this charming girl appeared to the abbé as a lucky hit. Rodolphe had the imagination inflamed with idle fables of love; Sarah should be the ravishing reality which should replace such charming dreams; for, thought the abbé, before arriving at the choice of pleasure or variety in voluptuousness, one begins almost always by a unique and romantic attachment. Louis XIV. and Louis XV. were only faithful to Marie Mancini and to Rosette d'Arcy.

According to the abbé, it would be thus with Rodolphe and the Scotch girl. This latter would without doubt have an immense influence over a heart submissive to the enchanting charm of a first love. To direct, prepare this influence, and to make use of it to ruin Murphy forever—such was the plan of the abbé.

Like a cunning man, he made the two ambitious pretenders understand that they must treat with him, being alone responsible to the grand-duke for the private life of the young prince.

This was not all; they must mistrust an ancient preceptor who had accompanied him, then on a military inspection: this man, rude, rough, hedged in with absurd prejudices, had had formerly great authority over Rodolphe, and could become a dangerous overseer; and far from excusing or tolerating the charming follies of youth, he would feel himself obliged to denounce them to the severe morality of the grand-duke. Tom and Sarah comprehended in half a word, although they had not informed the abbé of their secret designs. At the return of Rodolphe and the squire, all three, united by their common interests, were tacitly leagued against Murphy, their most redoubtable enemy.

CHAPTER XI.

A FIRST LOVE.

THAT which was expected to happen happened.

On his return, Rodolphe, seeing Sarah every day, became madly in love. Soon she avowed to him that she returned his love, although she forewarned him that it would cause a great deal of trouble. They never could be happy! A too great distance separated them! Thus she recommended to Rodolphe the most profound discretion, for fear of awakening the suspicions of the grand-duke, who would be inexorable, and deprive them of their only happiness, that of seeing each other every day. Rodolphe promised obedience, and that he would conceal his love. The Scotch girl was too ambitious, too much on her guard, to compromise and betray herself in the eyes of the court. The young prince felt, also, the necessity of dissimulation. He imitated the prudence of Sarah. Their secret was perfectly well kept for some time. When the brother and sister saw the phrensied passion of Rodolphe at its height, and the increasing admiration, more difficult to conceal from day to day, on the point of breaking forth, and thus losing all, they brought forth their great "coup de main."

The character of the abbé authorizing this confidence, of the most perfect morality, Tom made to him the first overtures on the necessity of a marriage between Rodolphe and Sarah; otherwise, added he very sincerely, he and his sister would immediately quit Gerolstein. Sarah partook of the love of the prince, but she preferred death to dishonour, and never could be anything else than the wife of His Highness. These pretensions stupified the priest; he never had thought Sarah so audaciously ambitious. Such a marriage, surrounded by numberless difficulties, by dangers of all sorts, appeared impossible to the abbé; he told Tom frankly the reasons why the grand-duke would never consent to such a union. Tom listened to these reasons, and acknowledged their importance; but he proposed as a "mezz termine," which would conciliate all, a secret marriage, all in rule, and only to be declared after the death of the reigning grand-duke. Sarah was of a noble, an ancient house; such a union did not want for precedents; Tom gave the abbé, and, consequently, the prince, eight days to decide. His sister could support no longer

the cruel anguish of uncertainty; if she must renounce the love of Rodolphe, she should take this sorrowful resolution as promptly as possible. As a motive for their hasty departure, which must then follow, Tom had addressed, he said, a letter to a friend in England, which was to be put in the office at London, and sent back to Germany; this letter would contain reasons for a return sufficiently strong, that Tom and Sarah would find themselves obliged to leave for some time the court of the grand-duke.

This time, at least, the abbé, guided by his evil opinion of human nature, guessed the truth. Seeking always for something hidden, even in the most honest sentiments, when he knew that Sarah wished to make her love legal by a marriage, he saw in it a proof, not of virtue, but of ambition. Certain of not being deceived concerning the views of Sarah, the abbé remained much perplexed. After all, the wish that Tom had expressed in the name of his sister was very honourable. What did he ask? either a separation, or a lawful union.

Notwithstanding his cynicism, the priest had not dared to show openly to Tom his surprise at the honourable motives which seemed to dictate his conduct, and to say rudely to him, that he and his sister had skilfully manoeuvred to lead the prince to an unequal marriage. The abbé had one of three parts to take: To inform the grand-duke of the matrimonial scheme; open the eyes of Rodolphe on the manoeuvres of Tom and Sarah; or to assist the marriage. But, to inform the grand-duke, was to alienate himself forever from the presumptive heir of the crown. To enlighten Rodolphe on the interested views of Sarah, was to expose himself to be received, as one always is by a lover, when one comes to depreciate the object loved; and, besides, what a terrible blow for the vanity or for the heart of the young duke, to reveal to him that it was his sovereign rank alone they wished to espouse; and, besides, what an anomaly! he, a priest, to condemn the conduct of a young girl, because she would only receive him as husband!

By aiding this marriage, on the contrary, the abbé attached the prince and his wife by the ties of profound gratitude, or, at least, by the binding of a dangerous act. Doubtless all might be discovered, and he would then be exposed to the anger of the grand-duke; but the marriage would be concluded, the union valid, the storm would blow over, and the future sovereign of Gerolstein would be so much the more friendly towards the abbé for his having encountered so many dangers in his service. After serious reflections the abbé decided to serve Sarah, not without a certain restriction, of which we shall speak hereafter.

When the abbé proposed to Rodolphe that he should never more see the enchanting girl, unless he would consent to a secret marriage, he sprang upon the neck of the priest, and called him his saviour, his friend, his father. Had the church and minister been there, the young prince would have married her at once. The abbé, for his own reasons, took charge of everything. He found a clergyman, witnesses, and the union (of which all the formalities were verified by Tom) was secretly celebrated, during a short

absence of the grand-duke, called to a conference of the Germanic Diet.

The predictions of the Scotch nurse were verified; Sarah married the heir to a crown. Without being less in love, Rodolphe became more circumspect, and, protected by Tom and the abbé, they conducted with so much caution that they escaped all suspicion.

During the first three months of his marriage Rodolphe was the happiest of men; when reflection succeeded his transports, he coolly contemplated his situation, and did not regret being united to Sarah by indissoluble ties; he gave up, without regret, his future projects of a voluptuous life, of which he had so ardently dreamed, and he made, with Sarah, the finest projects in the world on their future reign.

In these remote hypothesis, the part of prime minister, which the abbé had destined for himself in "petto," diminished much in importance. Sarah reserved for herself these governmental functions; too imperious not to be ambitious of power and domination, she hoped to reign in the place of Rodolphe. An event impatiently expected by Sarah, soon changed this calm into a tempest. She was about to become a mother.

There was manifested by this woman exigences at once new and frightful for Rodolphe; she declared to him, bursting into hypocritical tears, that she could no longer support the constraint with which she lived, a constraint that her situation rendered still more painful. In this extremity, she proposed resolutely to Rodolphe to confess all to the grand-duke; he was, as also the dowager duchess, more and more attached to Sarah. "Without doubt," added she, "he will be very indignant, will storm at first; but he loves his son so blindly, so tenderly, he has so much affection for him, that the paternal wrath will soon be appeased, and she would take at the court of Gerolstein the rank which belonged to her, doubly belonged to her, as she was about to give an heir to the heir-presumptive of the grand-duke." This pretension frightened Rodolphe; he knew the profound attachment of his father for him; but he also knew the inflexible principles of the grand-duke as to the duty of princes. To all his objections Sarah answered unmercifully: "I am your wife before God and before man. In a short time I cannot conceal my situation; I wish no longer to blush for a position of which I am, on the contrary, so proud." Tom took the part of his sister. "The marriage is indissoluble," said he to his most serene brother-in-law. "The grand-duke may exile you and your wife from court; nothing more; now he loves you too much to resort to such a measure; he will rather tolerate what he cannot prevent." These arguments, certainly very reasonable, did not calm the anxieties of Rodolphe. In the interim Tom was charged by the grand-duke to visit some states in Austria. This mission, which he could not refuse, would not detain him over fifteen days at the farthest; he set out, to his great regret, at a very decisive moment for his sister. She was at once pleased and displeased at his departure; she lost the aid of his counsels, but also, in case all should be discovered, he would be shielded from the rage of the grand-duke. Sarah was to keep Tom well informed day by day of the different aspects of an affair

so important for them both, and, to correspond the more securely and secretly, they agreed upon a cipher. This precaution alone proves that Sarah had to keep her brother advised of other things besides her love for Rodolphe. In effect, this egotistical, ambitious woman, had not felt her icy coldness of heart melt before the passionate love she had created. Maternity was only a motive for more action on Rodolphe, and nowise softened this soul of iron. The youth, the fond love, the inexperience of this prince, almost a child, so perfidiously drawn into an inextricable position, inspired her with no interest; in her intimate conversations with Tom she complained with disdain and bitterness of the weakness of this young man, who trembled before the most paternal of German princes, *who lived a long time!* In a word, this correspondence between the brother and sister unfolded clearly their interested selfishness, their ambitious calculations, their impatience—almost murderous; and completely laid bare the secret of this dark plot, crowned by the marriage of Rodolphe.

A few days after the departure of Tom, Sarah was present at the circle of the grand-duchess dowager. Many of the ladies looked at her with astonishment, and whispered to their neighbours. The grand-duchess Judith, notwithstanding her ninety years, had her hearing perfect and her sight good; this movement did not escape her. She called one of the ladies in waiting to her, and learned that Mlle. Sarah Seyton, of Halsburg, was thought to be rather less delicate and sylph-like than usual. The old princess adored her young protégée; she would have answered to heaven for her virtue. Indignant at the illiberality of these observations, she shrugged her shoulders, and said aloud from the end of the saloon, where she was seated, "My dear Sarah, listen!" Sarah arose. It was necessary for her to pass through the circle of ladies to reach the princess, who wished, with an all-benevolent intention, to confound the calumniators, and to prove to them that the figure of her favourite had lost none of its grace and "souplesse." Alas! the most perfidious enemy could not have contrived a worse plan than the duchess contrived in her desire to defend her protégée. She came to her. It needed the profound respect due to the grand-duchess to repress the murmur of surprise and indignation that arose when the young girl crossed the circle.

Those the least suspicious perceived that which Sarah desired no longer to conceal; the ambitious woman had managed this scene, in order to force Rodolphe to declare his marriage.

The grand-duchess, not willing to believe the evidence of her own senses, whispered to Sarah, "My dear child, you are frightfully dressed to-day. You had a figure that I can clasp in my hands; you are no longer recognisable."

We will relate at another time the consequences of this discovery, which lead to such terrible and great events. But we will now say, what the reader has doubtless suspected—that La Goualeuse, that Fleur de Marie was the fruit of this unhappy marriage, was the daughter of Rodolphe and Sarah—and that both of them thought her dead.

We must not forget that Rodolphe, after having visited the house in the Rue de Temple, had returned home, and that he intended, the same evening, to attend a ball given by Madame the ambassadress of * * *.

It is to this fête we will follow his highness the reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein, Gustavus Rodolphe, travelling in France under the title of the Count de Duren.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BALL.

At eleven o'clock in the evening, a Swiss, in grand livery, opened the door of a hotel in the Rue du Plumet, to let pass a magnificent berlin, drawn by two superb horses with long manes, and of the largest size. On the seat, covered with a hammer cloth edged with silken fringe, was seated a fat coachman, rendered still larger by a blue furred coat with a collar of marten skin, all the seams laced with silver, and decorated with frogs of the same material. Behind the carriage a gigantic and powdered footman, dressed in a blue and silver livery, accompanied a "chasseur" with formidable mustaches, laced like a drum-major, and whose chapeau, extensively embroidered, was half concealed by a plume of yellow and blue feathers. The lamps shed a vivid light in the interior of this vehicle, lined with satin, where could have been seen Rodolphe, seated on the right, having on the left the Baron de Graün; and opposite, the faithful Murphy. Out of deference to the sovereign, who was represented by the ambassador where he was going, Rodolphe wore on his coat only the diamond crown of the order of * * *. The orange riband, and the enamelled cross of "Grand Commander of the Golden Eagle of Gerolstein" hung from the neck of Sir Walter Murphy. The Baron de Graün was decorated in the same manner. We shall only just mention an innumerable quantity of crosses of all orders, which, suspended from a golden chain, were placed between the two first buttonholes of his coat.

"I am really quite happy," said Rodolphe, "for the good news that Madame Georges gives me concerning my poor little protégée of the Boqueval farm; the treatment of David has done wonders. Except for the sadness which overwhelms this unfortunate child, she is much better; and speaking of the Goualeuse, acknowledge, Sir Walter Murphy," added Rodolphe smiling, "that if one of your acquaintances of the cité should see you thus disguised, valiant coalman, she would be much astonished." "But I think, monseigneur, that your highness would cause the same surprise, if you would go to-night to the Rue du Temple and make a friendly visit to Madame Pipelet, for the purpose of diverting a little the melancholy of this poor Alfred, who only asks to love you, as this estimable 'portière' said to your highness."

"Monseigneur has so perfectly described Alfred, with his majestic green coat, his doctoral air, and his immovable 'chapeau tromblon,'" said the baron, "that I think I see him on his throne in the obscure and smoky lodge. Be-

sides, your highness is, I dare hope, satisfied with the information of my secret agent! His house in the Rue du Temple has completely answered the expectations of monseigneur!" "Yes," said Rodolphe, "I have even found more than I expected." Then, after a moment's silence, and to drive away the painful thoughts which were caused by his fears for Madame d'Harville, he continued, in a more cheerful tone, "I dare not avow this childishness, but I find enjoyment in these contrasts; one day a fan-painter, sitting down in a dirty room in the Rue aux Fèves; this morning as a clerk, offering a glass of cassis to Madame Pipelet; and to-night, one of the privileged, by the grace of God, who reign in this lower world. (The man with forty crowns says, 'my income,' just the same as a millionaire)," added Rodolphe, by way of parenthesis, and in allusion to the smallness of his state.

"But many millionnaires, monseigneur, have not the rare, the admirable good sense of the man of forty crowns," said the baron. "Ah! my dear de Graün, you are too good, a thousand times too good, you overcome me," answered Rodolphe, feigning an embarrassed and delighted manner, while the baron looked at Murphy like a man who perceived too late that he had said a foolish thing.

"Truly," continued Rodolphe, with imperturbable gravity, "I do not know, my dear De Graün, how to exhibit my gratitude for the good opinion you have of me, and, above all, how to make you any return."

"Monseigneur, I beg you will not take the trouble," said the baron, who had for a moment forgot that Rodolphe always revenged himself for flattery, which he held in contempt, by the most relentless railery.

"How then! Baron, but I cannot remain in your debt; this, unfortunately, is all I can say to you for the moment; on honour, you look as if you were not more than twenty years; Antinous had never features more enchanting than yours." "Ah! monseigneur, pardon!" "Do look, Murphy! the Apollo Belvidere, has he a form more graceful, more airy, more elegant, more juvenile!" "Monseigneur, it is so long since such a thing has happened before to me." "And this purple mantle, how well it becomes him!" "Monseigneur, I will never offend again." "And this circle of gold, which retains, without concealing it, the curl of his beautiful black hair, which floats on his divine neck." "Ah! Monseigneur, pardon, pardon; I repent," said the unhappy diplomatist, with an expression of comic despair. (The reader must not forget that he was fifty years of age, with gray hair, curled and powdered, a stiff white cravat, thin face, and gold spectacles.) "'Vrai Dieu! Murphy, he only wants a quiver of silver on his shoulders, and a bow in his hands, to resemble the vanquisher of the Pythian serpent!"

"Pardon him, my lord; do not crush him under the weight of this mythology," said the squire, laughing; "I will be security to your highness, that for a long time he will not venture to say a flattery, since in the new vocabulary of Gerolstein the word truth is thus translated." "How! you also, old Murphy! at this moment you dare—" "My lord, this poor De Graün affects me. I desire to partake his pun-

ishment." "Monsieur, my coalman in ordinary here is a proof of friendship that I honour; but, seriously, my dear De Graün, how could you forget that I never permit flattery except from a Harmeins and his fellows, for, to be just, he does not know how to say anything else; it is the warbling of such birds; but for a man of your taste and mind, fy! baron."

"Well, monseigneur," said the baron, resolutely, "your highness, will pardon me; but there is much pride in your aversion to flattery."

"Very well, baron; I like that better; explain yourself." "Well, monseigneur, it is absolutely as if a very handsome woman said to one of her admirers, 'Mon Dieu! I know that I am charming; your approbation is altogether superfluous.' Why affirm what is evident? Do people cry in the streets, 'The sun gives light?'"

"This is more adroit, baron, and more dangerous; thus, to vary your punishment, I will avow to you, that this infernal Abbé Polidori, could not have better contrived to conceal the poison of flattery." "Monseigneur, I am silent."

"Then your Highness," said Murphy, seriously this time, "does not doubt that this is the abbé disguised as a quack?" "I doubt it no longer, since you have been advised that he has been in Paris for some time." "I had forgotten, or, rather, omitted to speak of him, my lord," said Murphy, sadly, "because I know how odious the recollection of this priest is to your highness."

A shade of gloom overspread the features of Rodolphe; and, buried in sad reflections, he remained silent until the moment that the carriage entered into the courtyard of the embassy. Lights gleamed from every window of this immense hotel; a row of servants, in grand livery, extended from the doorway and antechambers to the waiting-room, where were placed the valets de chambre. All was arranged in a splendid and royal manner. The count and countess had remained in their first reception room until the arrival of Rodolphe. He soon entered, followed by Murphy and M. de Graün. Rodolphe was then about thirty-six years of age; but, although he approached the decline of life, the perfect regularity of his features, as we have said, "almost too handsome for a man," and his air of affable dignity, would always have rendered him extremely remarkable, even if these advantages had not been enhanced by the august éclat of his rank. When he appeared in the first saloon of the embassy, he seemed transformed; it was no longer the blustering look, the quick and bold bearing of the fan-painter, the conqueror of the Chourineur; it was no longer the merry clerk who sympathized so gayly with the misfortunes of Madame Pipelet. It was a prince, in the poetic ideality of the word.

Rodolphe carried his head erect and proudly, his chestnut hair curling naturally around his broad and noble forehead; his expression sweet, and yet dignified; if he spoke to any one, with the kindness so natural to him, his smiles, full of charms, displayed his beautiful teeth, which the dark colour of his slight moustache, rendered still more dazzling; his brown whiskers surrounded his face, of a perfect oval, uniting under his dimpled chin, which was slightly prominent.

Rodolphe was dressed very plainly. His cravat and waistcoat were white. A blue coat, quite closely buttoned, with the diamond order on the left breast, displayed his figure—quite as good as it was easy and elegant; in fine, something manly and resolute in his attitude corrected that which was perhaps too agreeable in the "gracieux ensemble."

Rodolphe went so little into society, and he had such a princely air, that his arrival produced a certain sensation; every look was turned towards him when he appeared in the first saloon of the embassy, accompanied by Murphy and the Baron de Graün, who followed some steps behind him.

An attaché, charged to watch his arrival, went immediately to inform the Countess*** who, with her husband, advanced to meet Rodolphe, saying, "I do not know how to express to your highness all my gratitude for the honour which your highness deigns to favour me with this evening."

"You know, 'Madame l'Ambassadrice,' that I am always very desirous to pay my respects to you, and very happy to say to Monsieur l'Ambassador how much I esteem him; for we are old acquaintances, Monsieur le Comte!"

"Your highness is too kind in recollecting it; it gives me a new motive never to forget your goodness."

"I assure you, 'Monsieur le Comte,' that it is not my fault if certain recollections are always before me; I have the happiness of only remembering what is agreeable to me."

"Then your highness is most marvellously endowed," said the Countess, smiling.

"Am I not, Madame? Thus, some years hence, I will have, I hope, the pleasure to recall to you this day, all the taste and extreme elegance which preside over this fête. For, frankly, I can whisper in your ear, that you alone understand how to give balls." "Monseigneur!!" "And this is not all: tell me, 'Monsieur l'Ambassadeur,' why it is that the women always appear so much handsomer here than anywhere else?" "It is because your highness extends towards them the same good-will with which we are honoured."

"Permit me to differ with you, Monsieur le Comte; I believe that it is wholly referable to 'Madame l'Ambassadrice!'"

"Will your highness have the goodness to explain this to me?" said the countess, smiling.

"It is very plain, madame; you know how to receive all these fine ladies with urbanity so refined, with a grace so perfect; you say to each a word so charming and so flattering, even to those who do not altogether merit this amiable complaisance," said Rodolphe, with a slight smile of malice, "and they are so much the more delighted for being distinguished by you, because those who do merit it are so much the less delighted at your appreciation. This grateful satisfaction reflects from every countenance; happiness renders things the least agreeable attractive; and this is the reason, Madame la Comtesse, that women appear so much prettier in your saloons than elsewhere. I am sure that Monsieur l'Ambassadeur thinks as I do." "Your Highness gives me too many good reasons to think as he does, that I should not acknowledge it."

"And I, monseigneur," said the countess, "at the risk of becoming as pretty as these fine ladies who do not altogether merit the compliments one pays them, I accept the flattering explanation of your highness with as much gratitude and pleasure as if it were real."

"To convince you, madame, that nothing is more true, let us make some observations on the effects of flattery on the countenance." "Ah! monseigneur, it would be a horrible snare," said the countess, laughing.

"Come, Madame l'Ambassadrice, I renounce my project but on one condition: it is that you will permit me to offer you my arm. I have heard of a flower-garden, truly fairylke, in the month of January; will you be kind enough to conduct me to this wonder of the Arabian Nights?" "With the greatest pleasure, monseigneur; but you have heard an exaggerated account. Your highness, however, can judge for himself, at least, if his habitual indulgence does not abuse." Rodolphe offered his arm to the ambassadress, and entered with her into the other saloons, while the Count *** conversed with the Baron de Graun and Murphy, whom he had known for a long time.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WINTER GARDEN.

AND nothing, truly, could be more fairlylike, more worthy of the Arabian Nights, than the garden of which Rodolphe had spoken to the Countess ***.

Let the reader imagine, at the end of a long and splendid gallery, a space of about two hundred and forty feet in length by about one hundred and eighty in breadth, an arched glass roof of extreme lightness, covering, at the height of fifty feet, this parallelogram; its walls lined with looking-glass, and covered with a fine trellis of dark green, resembling a bower, from the reflection of the numerous lights on the glasses; a row of orange-trees as large as those of the Tuileries, and camellias of the same size; the first laden with fruit, glistening like so many golden apples among a foliage of shining green; the second, enamelled with purple, white, and rose-coloured flowers, were placed against the walls in their entire length. This was the enclosure of this garden. Five or six enormous, bushy trees and shrubs of India or the tropics, planted in vast cases filled with moss, and surrounded by walks of shell-mosaic, sufficiently wide for two or three persons to pass.

It is impossible to describe the effect that was produced in the dead of winter, in the midst of a ball, by this display of rich and splendid vegetation.

These immense bananas reached almost to the vaulted roof, and mingled their large palms of lustrous green with the lance-shaped leaves of the magnolia, some of which were already covered with their large flowers, as odoriferous as they were magnificent; from their bell-shaped calices, purple without and silvered within, shot forth their golden stamina; farther on, palm-trees, dates from the Levant, red latimers, figs from the Indies, all hardy, flourishing, and covered with leaves, completed these im-

mense masses of verdure; a verdure exceedingly lustrous and brilliant, like all the vegetation of the tropics, which seems to borrow its colours from the emerald, so much are the leaves of these trees, thick, pulpy, and polished, covered with shining and silvery tints. On the whole of the trellis, among the orange-trees, jumping from one branch to another, here arranged in garlands, there twisted into a spiral form, still farther tangled in inextricable network, ran, entwined, clambered, even to the very top of the vaulted arch, an innumerable quantity of climbing plants, the winged passion flower, and the "passiflores," with their large purple flowers, striped with blue and crowned with a crest of black violet, fell from the top of the archlike colossal garlands, and seemed to wish to remount by clasping their delicate tendrils around the gigantic branches of the aloe.

In another place a bignonia of India, with long calices of sulphur, and light foliage, is surrounded by a "stéphanotis" with its richly-perfumed white flowers; these two convolvuluses, thus entwined, festoon with their green fringe and golden bells the immense velvet leaves of the Indian fig-tree.

In the distance rise and fall, in a sort of flowery cascade, an innumerable quantity of the plant swallow-wort, of which the leaves and umbels of fifteen or twenty starred flowers are so thick, so polished, that they look like bunches of enamelled roses, surrounded by small leaves of green porcelain.

The borders are composed of Cape heath, Mozelle tulips, narcissuses from Constantinople, Persian hyacinths, iris, cyclamen, which form a sort of natural carpet, where all the colours, all the shades, mix in a most splendid manner.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk, some blue, others of a pale rose colour, here and there half concealed by the foliage, illuminate this garden. It is almost impossible to imagine the soft and mysterious light which proceeded from the mixture of these two shades, a charming, fantastic light, which resembled the clear, ethereal blue of a summer's night, slightly tinged by the rosy reflections of the aurora-borealis.

This immense conservatory was reached by descending two or three steps from a long gallery, dazzling with gold mirrors, crystals, and lights. This blazing light seemingly framed the penumbra, where were vaguely to be perceived the large trees of the winter garden, which could be seen through the large bay window, half closed by two large doors of crimson velvet. It might have been taken for a gigantic window opening on some fine landscape of Asia during the serenity of twilight. Seen from the bottom of the garden, where were placed immense divans under a dome of foliage and flowers, the gallery presented a striking contrast to the soft obscurity of the conservatory. It was in the distance a kind of luminous golden mist, in which sparkled, like a living embroidery, the dazzling and variegated colours of the ladies' dresses, and the prismatic scintillations of jewels and diamonds.

The sounds from the orchestra, weakened by the distance and by the heavy joyous buzzing of the gallery, died away melodiously in the immovable foliage of the large exotic trees. One involuntarily spoke in a low tone in this garden;

the light noise of a footstep was scarcely heard, hardly the rustling of the satin robes; this air, at once light, warm, and embalmed with the thousand sweet odours of the aromatic plants, this dream-like, distant music, cast over the senses an ineffable state of quietude and repose.

Certainly, two lovers just caught and happy, seated on the silk in some corner of this Eden, intoxicated with love, harmony, and the rich perfume, could not find a more enchanting spot for still opening love; though, alas! one or two months of such peaceful happiness is sufficient to change two lovers so awkward into frigid man and wife.

On reaching this charming winter garden, Rodolphe could not refrain from an exclamation of surprise, and said to the ambassadress, "Truly, madame, I could not have believed such a wonder possible. It is not only great luxury joined to good taste, but it is poetry in action. Instead of describing like a poet, of painting like a painter, you create what one could hardly dream."

"Your highness is a thousand times too good."

"Frankly, you must acknowledge that he who would know how to describe faithfully this enchanting picture, with its charms of colour and contrast—there the splendid tumult, here this delicious retreat, admit madame, that, be he painter or poet, he would make an admirable work, and that only in producing yours."

"The praises with which the indulgence of your highness inspires you, are so much the more dangerous, as one cannot prevent one's self from being charmed by them, and listening to them with extreme pleasure '*malgré soi*.' But look, monseigneur, what a charming young woman! Your highness will allow, at least, that the Marchioness d'Harville must be handsome *everywhere*. Is she not ravishing with grace! Does she not gain much from contrast with the severe beauty who accompanies her!"

The Countess Sarah M'Gregor and the Marchioness d'Harville descended at this moment the steps which led from the gallery to the garden.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THE praises of the ambassadress respecting the Marchioness d'Harville were not exaggerated. Nothing can give an idea of that enchanting face, blooming then in all the freshness of delicate beauty, a beauty so much the more uncommon, as it existed less in the regularity of features than in the inexpressible charm of the aspect of the marchioness, whose lovely countenance concealed itself, as it were, under a touching expression of *goodness*. We insist on this last word, because ordinarily it is not *goodness* that predominates in the looks of a

young woman of twenty, handsome, witty, sought after, flattered, as was Madame d'Harville. Hence, one felt one's self singularly interested from the contact of this ineffable sweetness, and with the success which she enjoyed, without adverting to the advantages of name, birth, and fortune, which she united. We will try to make ourselves understood.

Too worthy, too eminently endowed to seek homage, Madame d'Harville showed herself equally as grateful to those who rendered it to her, as if she had not deserved it; she did not pride herself on it, but it made her happy; indifferent to praise, but very sensible to benevolence, she perfectly distinguished flattery from sympathy.

Her keen, just wit, sometimes wicked without wickedness, pursued in a subtle and inoffensive railery those persons who, delighted with themselves and always occupied in attracting attention, intruded their faces, radiant with selfish joy, or puffed out with stupid pride; "Persons," said Madame d'Harville, pleasantly, "who all their life seem to be dancing, 'one gentleman forward twice' opposite an invisible mirror, on which they smile complacently." A character at once timid and almost proud in its reserve, on the contrary, inspired Madame d'Harville with a certain interest.

These few words will assist the reader to understand the beauty of Madame d'Harville, if we may so express it. Her complexion, of dazzling fairness, was shaded by the long curls of her brown hair, which fell on a neck of marble. It were difficult to describe the angelic beauty of her large gray eye, fringed with long black lashes. Her rosy mouth, of transcendent sweetness, was to these charming eyes that which her affable and touching conversation was to their sad and mild expression. We will not speak of her fine figure, nor of the exquisite distinction of her whole person. She wore a robe of white ~~velvet~~ trimmed with natural camelias, and leaves from the same plant, among which diamonds, half concealed, here and there shone, like so many drops of sparkling dew. A similar garland was placed gracefully on her pure and white forehead. The style of beauty of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor heightened that of the Marchioness d'Harville. About thirty-six years of age, Sarah appeared hardly thirty. Nothing seems more healthful to the body than cold egotism; one is preserved fresh for a long time in this kind of ice.

Certain hard, withered hearts, impregnable to those emotions, which wear them out, are never concerned except for the misfortunes of pride or the mistakes of a deceased ambition; there sorrow has but a feeble reaction on the physical man. The conservation of Sarah proves what we have advanced. Except a slight embonpoint, which gave to her figure, much taller, but less slight than that of Madame d'Harville, a voluptuous grace, Sarah shone with an éclat quite juvenile; very few could sustain the deceitful fire of her black and piercing eye; her humid and red lips, half lying, expressed resolution and sensuality. The blue veins of her temples and neck appeared through the milky whiteness of a fine and transparent skin.

The Countess McGreger wore a robe of "moire paille," under a tunic of straw-coloured crape; a simple crown of the natural leaves of a "pyrrus" of emerald green surrounded her brow and harmonized wonderfully with her bands of black hair, which was divided on her forehead: this severe "coiffure" gave an antique cast to the imperious profile of this woman.

Many persons, dupes of their own looks, appear to see an irresistible vocation in the character of their faces. The one finds he has an excessively warlike look; he fights. Another looks like a poet; he rhymes; conspirator, he conspires; politician, he becomes a politician; preacher, he preaches. Sarah thought, and not without reason, that she had a perfectly royal air; she must adhere to the predictions of the old Highlander, which were only half realized, and persist in the belief of a sovereign destiny.

The marchioness and Sarah had perceived Rodolphe in the garden, at the moment they entered; but the prince appeared not to see them, for he turned into another walk as they approached.

"The prince is so much occupied with the ambassadress," said Madame d'Harville to Sarah, "that he does not see us."

"Do not believe that, my dear Clémence," answered the countess, who was very intimate with Madame d'Harville; "the prince, on the contrary, has seen us distinctly; but I made him afraid. His pouting still continues."

"Less than ever can I comprehend his desire to avoid you: often I have reproached him with the strangeness of his conduct towards you, an old friend. 'The Countess Sarah and I are mortal enemies,' he answered, laughing. 'I have made a vow never to speak to her, and it must needs be a very sacred vow that makes me deprive myself of the mediation of so amiable a person.' Thus, my dear Sarah, as singular as this answer appeared to me, I was obliged to be contented with it.*" "I assure you that the cause of this mortal quarrel, half comic, half serious, is, nevertheless, most innocent. If a third person was not interested, I should confide to you this great secret. But what is the matter, my dear child? you appear abstracted!"

"It is nothing; it was so warm just now in the gallery, that I felt slightly indisposed; let us sit down a moment here: it will pass over, I hope."

"You are right; ah, here is an obscure corner; you will be there perfectly secure from the researches of those whom your absence will drive to despair," added Sarah, smiling, and laying an emphasis on these words. They both seated themselves on a divan. "I said those whom your absence will drive to despair, my dear Clémence. Don't you thank me for my discretion!" The young woman slightly

blushed, held down her head, but made no answer.

"How unreasonable you are!" said Sarah, in a tone of friendly reproach. "Have you no confidence in me, child? without doubt, child, I am of an age to call you daughter."

"I want confidence in you!" said the marchioness to Sarah, sadly; "have I not rather said to you what I never dared to say to myself?"

"Wonderful; well! let us see—speak of him: you have, then, sworn to drive him to desperation—to death?"

"Ah!" cried Madame d'Harville, with affliction, "what do you say?"

"You don't know him yet, poor child. He is a man of great energy, to whom life is of little value; he has always been so unfortunate. And they say you take pleasure in tormenting him!"

"Do you think so! *mon Dieu*!"

"You do not intend it, perhaps, but so it is. Oh, if you knew how sadly sensitive and susceptible those are whom great misfortunes overwhelm! Really, just now, I saw two large tears roll in his eyes."

"Can it be true?"

"Certainly, and that in the midst of a ball, and at the risk of ridicule, if this sorrow had been perceived. Do you know that one must love deeply to suffer thus, and, above all, not to think of concealing from the world that one suffers thus!"

"In mercy, do not speak to me of this," answered Madame d'Harville, in a trembling voice; "you give me pain. I too well know this expression of suffering, at once so tender and resigned. Alas! it is the pity with which he has inspired me which has ruined me," said Madame d'Harville, involuntarily. Sarah appeared not to have understood the meaning of this last word, and answered,

"What exaggeration! ruined, because you have coquetted with a man, who pushes discretion and reserve so far as not to be presented to your husband, for fear of compromising you! M. Charles Robert, is he not a man of soul, honour, and delicacy? If I defend him with warmth, it is because you have become acquainted with him at my house, and that he has as much respect for you as attachment."

"I have never doubted his noble qualities, you have always spoken so well of him. But you know that it is his misfortunes that have rendered him interesting in my eyes."

"And how much does he merit and justify this interest? avow it. And, besides, such an admirable face, must it not be the mirror of the soul! With his tall and fine figure, he recalls to my mind the time of the 'preux chevaliers.' I saw him once in uniform; no one could make a finer appearance. Certainly, if nobility was to be obtained by merit and figure, M. Charles Robert would be duke and peer. Would he not marvellously represent one of the great names of France?"

"You are not ignorant that nobility of birth finds but little favour in my eyes; you, who re-

* The love of Rodolphe for Sarah, and the events which succeeded, having taken place eighteen years previous, were unknown in the fashionable world, both parties having their own reasons for concealing it.

proach me too often with being a little republican," said Madame d'Harville, smiling.

"Assuredly, I have always thought, like you, that M. Charles Robert had no need of titles to make himself agreeable; and, besides, what talent! what a charming voice! What a treasure he has been to us in our morning concerts! Do you remember the first time you sang together, what expression in the duet he sang with you! what emotion!"

"Stop, I beg you," said Madame d'Harville, after a long silence; "let us change the conversation."

"Why?"

"All this makes me very sad—what you told me just now of his desperate manner." "I assure you that, in the excess of sorrow, such a character might seek relief in death." "Oh! I beg you, stop! stop!" said Madame d'Harville, interrupting Sarah; "this thought has already struck me. Once more let us speak of something else—of your mortal enemy," added she, with an affected gayety; "let us talk of the prince, whom I have not seen for a long time. Do you know he is charming, although almost a king! All republican as I am, I find but few men as agreeable as he is."

Sarah cast by stealth a scrutinizing and suspicious glance at Madame d'Harville, and answered gayly, "You must acknowledge, my dear Clémence, that you are very capricious. I have known in your feelings of admiration and aversion towards the prince, that are very singular. Some months since, when he first arrived here, you were so much taken, that, between us, I feared a moment for your heart."

"Thanks to you, at least," said Madame d'Harville, smiling, "my admiration was not of very long duration; you played so well the part of mortal enemy, you told me so many things about the prince, that I acknowledge indifference took the place of the admiration which made you fear for my heart; a fear that your enemy took no trouble to keep alive: for a short period after your revelations, the prince, while he continued to see my husband intimately, almost ceased to honour me with his visits."

"Apropos! and your husband; is he here to-night?" said Sarah. "No! he did not wish to come out," answered Madame d'Harville, with embarrassment.

"It seems to me that he goes less and less into society?"

"Yes: sometimes he prefers to remain at home." The marchioness was visibly embarrassed; Sarah perceived it, and continued,

"The last time I saw him, he seemed paler than ordinary."

"Yes: he had been rather unwell." "My dear Clémence, do you wish me to be frank with you?"

"I beg you."

"Whenever your husband is spoken of, you appear to be singularly agitated."

"I! what folly!"

"Sometimes, in speaking of him, your countenance expresses—mon Dieu! how shall I tell you this!" and Sarah, laying great stress on the following words, and looking as if she

would read the very heart of Clémence, continued, "Yes, your face expresses a kind of fearful repugnance."

The impassable features of Madame d'Harville at first defied the inquisitive glance of Sarah. However, this last perceived a slight nervous trepidation, almost invisible, which agitated a moment the lower lip of the marchioness. Not wishing to push these investigations farther, and awaken the suspicions of her friend, the countess hastened to add, "Yes, a fearful repugnance: such as a jealous, peevish husband would inspire."

At this interpretation, the slight convulsive movement of the lip ceased; she appeared relieved from an enormous weight, and answered,

"But no, M. d'Harville is neither peevish nor jealous." Then, seeking, doubtless, a pretext for breaking a conversation which was irksome to her, she cried, "Ah! mon Dieu! here is that insupportable Duke de Lucenay, one of my husband's friends. I trust he will not see us! where does he come from? I thought him a thousand leagues off!" "Yes, he was said to be off on a voyage of a year or two in the East; he has not been gone more than five months. Here is a sudden arrival, which must annoy the duchess, although the duke is not very troublesome," said Sarah, with a wicked smile. "She will not, however, be alone in confounding this unlucky return. M. de Saint Rémy will partake of her sorrow." "Don't be slanderous, my dear Sarah; rather say that this return will be sorrowful for every one. M. de Lucenay is disagreeable enough for you to generalize the grief."

"Slanderous? certainly not; I am only an echo. Besides, they do say that M. de Saint Rémy, the model of fashion, who has dazzled all Paris with his ostentation, is almost ruined, although he goes on as usual; it is true that Madame de Lucenay is very rich."

"Oh! how shocking!"

"I repeat, I am but an echo—ah! mon Dieu! the duke has seen us. He comes, we must be resigned. It is afflicting; I know nothing in the world more insupportable than this man; he is such bad company; he laughs so loud at his own jokes; he is so noisy that he almost deafens one; if you have any affection for your smelling bottle or your fan, keep them from him; for he has the inconvenient fashion of breaking everything he touches, and that with the most frolicsome and satisfied air in the world."

Belonging to one of the most noble houses of France, still young, with a face which would not have been disagreeable except for the length of his nose, M. de Lucenay joined to a boisterous noise and perpetual agitation a voice and laugh so astounding, witticisms so detestable, attitudes so gross and unexpected, that it was necessary at each moment to recall his name to prevent surprise at seeing him in the midst of the most distinguished society of Paris, and to understand how his eccentricities of language and gesture could be tolerated for a moment. They fled from him like the plague, although he was not wanting in a certain wit, which hit here and there, through a most incred-

ible exuberance of words. He was one of those avenging beings, into the hands of whom one would always wish to see fall those who are odious and ridiculous.

Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, one of the most agreeable, and yet one of the most fashionable of Paris, notwithstanding her thirty years, had made herself much talked about; but her levity of conduct was almost excused, in reflecting on the insupportable behaviour of M. de Lucenay. As soon as the latter perceived Madame d'Harville and Sarah, he belowered out, "Well! well! what is all this? what do I see—how! the prettiest woman of the ball hiding away in a corner—is it permitted? Must I come from the antipodes to put a stop to such scandal! If you continue to conceal yourself from the general admiration, marchioness, I'll scream like a burned child—I'll cry at the loss of the most charming ornament of this fête!"

And, by way of peroration, M. de Lucenay threw himself backward alongside of the marchioness, on the divan; after which he crossed his left leg on his right thigh, and took his foot in his hand.

"How, sir, have you already returned from Constantinople?" said Madame d'Harville, drawing back with a movement of impatience.

"Already! You say just what my wife thinks, I am sure, for she would not accompany me to-night on my *reentrée* into society. To return, and surprise your friends, and be received in this way!"

"It is quite plain—it was so easy for you to remain amiable there," said Madame d'Harville, with a half smile.

"That is to say, remain absent, is it not? Oh, it is shameful, infamous, what you have just said!" cried M. de Lucenay, uncrossing his legs, and drumming on his hat like a tabor. "For the love of Heaven, Monsieur de Lucenay, do not scream so loud; and keep yourself quiet, or you will compel us to leave our seats," said Madame de Lucenay, with temper.

"Leave your seats! it will be to give me your arm, and take a turn in the gallery!"

"With you? certainly not. Come, I beg you will not touch this bouquet; I pray you will leave this fan alone; you will break it, according to custom." "If it is only that, I have broken more than one—go along! yes, above all, a splendid Chinese affair, that Madame de Vaudemont gave to my wife." In speaking these reassuring words, M. de Lucenay busied himself in pulling towards him some of the climbing plants. He at length detached them from the trees which sustained them; they fell, and the duke remained, as it were, crowned with the luxuriant foliage. Then he burst into a shout of laughter so shrill, so mad, so deafening, that Madame d'Harville would have fled from this noisy and disagreeable person, if she had not perceived M. Charles Robert (the commandant, as Madame Pipelet called him) advancing from the other extremity of the walk. The young woman feared that it might appear as if she went to meet him, and remained alongside of M. de Lucenay.

"I say, Madame M^cGregor, I must look like

the god Pan, like a naiad, like a sylvan, under this foliage!" said M. de Lucenay, addressing Sarah, seating himself roughly beside her. "Speaking of savages, reminds me I must tell you a story outrageously ridiculous. Imagine that at Otaheite—"

"Monsieur le Duc," said Sarah, in a frozen tone.

"Well! no, I won't tell you my story; I'll keep it for Madame de Foubonne, who is yonder."

This was a little fat woman of fifty years, with a great deal of pretension, and very ridiculous, whose chin touched her neck, and who always showed the whites of her large eyes in speaking of her heart, the languor of her heart, the want of her heart, the aspirations of her heart. She wore on this evening a frightful turban of copper-coloured stuff, with a sprinkling of green flowers. "I'll keep it for Madame de Foubonne," cried the duke.

"What is it, then, Monsieur le Duc?" said Madame de Foubonne, with affectation, and commencing to turn up her whites, as the people say. "We are talking, madame, of a history horribly indecent, unsuitable, incongruous."

"Ah! mon Dieu! and who would dare? who is it who would allow?"

"I, madame; it will make an old 'chambouran' blush. But I know your taste. Listen to it."

"Monsieur!"

"Well! no, you shall not hear my story, exactly! because, after all, you, who always dress so well, with so much taste, with so much elegance—you have to-night a turban, which, allow me to tell you, on my word of honour, resembles an old turtle eaten up with *verdigris*;" and the duke screamed with laughter.

"If you have returned from the East to recommence your absurd jokes, which are generally excused because you are half a fool," said the fat woman, much irritated, "your return will be much regretted, monsieur;" and she walked off majestically. "I want four men to hold me, to keep me from tearing off the turban from this precious old woman," said M. de Lucenay; "but I respect her—she is an orphan. Ah! ah! ah!" and again he laughed. "Hallo! M. Charles Robert!" continued M. de Lucenay. "I met him in the Pyrenees—a shining young man; he sings like a swan. You shall see, marchioness, how I'll intrigue him. Shall I present him to you?" "Keep silent, and leave us quiet," said Sarah. While M. Charles Robert advanced slowly, pretending to admire the flowers, M. de Lucenay had manoeuvred to get possession of the "flacon" of Sarah, and he busied himself very quietly in endeavouring to break the stopper of this "bijou." M. Charles Robert gradually approached; his tall figure was in perfect proportion, his complexion of irreproachable purity, his dress of supreme elegance; yet his face, his finish, was wanting in grace and distinction; his bearing was stiff, constrained, his hands and feet large and vulgar; when he perceived Madame d'Harville, the regular nothingness of his features was concealed at once under an expression of

profound melancholy, much too sudden not to be feigned; nevertheless, this seeming was perfect. M. Robert had the appearance of being so frightfully unhappy, so naturally desolate, when he drew near to Madame d'Harville, that she could not but think of the sinister words of Sarah on the excesses to which despair might carry him. "Ah! good-day, then, my dear sir!" said M. de Lucenay, stopping him as he was passing; "I have not had the pleasure of seeing you since I met you at the springs. But what is the matter? How ill you look!"

Here M. Charles Robert cast a long and melancholy look on Madame d'Harville, and answered the duke, with a voice plaintively accentuated, "Truly, sir, I am suffering." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! you cannot, then, get rid of your *pituite*," asked M. de Lucenay, with an air of the most serious interest. This question was so absurd, so impertinent, that for a moment M. Charles Robert remained stupified, stunned; then, with a flush of rage mounting to his brow, he said, with a firm and cold voice, to M. de Lucenay, "Since you take so much interest in my health, I hope you will come to-morrow morning to hear how I am?" "How, then, my dear sir—but certainly I will send," said the duke, with hauteur. M. Charles Robert made a kind of half bow, and passed on. "The best of the joke is, that he hasn't got the 'pituite' any more than the grand Turk," said M. de Lucenay, falling back on his seat near Sarah, "unless I have guessed it without knowing. I say, Madame M'Gregor, does he look to you as if he had the 'pituite,' this gentleman?"

Sarah turned her back upon M. de Lucenay, without answering a word. All this passed very rapidly. Sarah had with much difficulty kept from laughing. Madame d'Harville had suffered much in thinking of the feelings of a man who was questioned so ridiculously before a woman he loved; she was alarmed for fear a duel might take place; then, urged on by sentiments of irresistible pity, she arose quickly, took Sarah's arm, rejoined M. Charles Robert, who was beside himself with rage, and whispered as she passed him, "To-morrow, at one o'clock, I will go."

Then, regaining the gallery with the countess, she left the ball.

CHAPTER XV.

YOU COME VERY LATE, MY ANGEL.

RODOLPHE, in coming to the fête as an act of "complaisance," wished also to discover if his fears concerning Madame d'Harville were well founded, and if she was really the heroine of the story of Madame Pipelet. After leaving the garden with the Countess * * *, Rodolphe had sauntered in vain through several saloons, in the hope of meeting Madame d'Harville alone. He returned to the conservatory, when, as he stopped for a moment on the first step of the staircase, he was a witness of the rapid scene which passed between Madame d'Harville and

M. Charles Robert, after the detestable pleasantries of the Duke de Lucenay; Rodolphe witnessed an exchange of very significant glances. A secret presentiment told him that this tall, handsome young man was the commandant. Wishing to be assured, he entered the gallery. A waltz was about to commence; at the end of a few moments, he saw M. Charles Robert standing in a doorway. He appeared doubly satisfied both with his answer to M. de Lucenay (M. Charles was very brave, notwithstanding his follies) and with the rendezvous that Madame d'Harville had given him for the next day, quite certain that this time she would not fail. Rodolphe went to look for Murphy: "You see that fair young man in the midst of that group there?" "That tall man who appears so self-satisfied?" "Yes, monseigneur."

"Endeavour to approach near enough to whisper to him without his seeing you, and so he alone can hear these words: *You come very late, my angel!*" The squire looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "Seriously, monseigneur?" "Seriously. If he turns at these words, guard that magnificent 'sang-froid' that I have so often admired, so that the gentleman cannot discover who has pronounced these words." "I comprehend nothing, my lord, but I obey." The worthy Murphy, before the end of the waltz, had contrived to place himself exactly behind M. Charles Robert. Rodolphe, perfectly well placed, so as to lose none of the effects of this experiment, followed Murphy with his eyes; at the end of a second, M. Charles Robert turned suddenly round, with a most surprised look.

The impassable squire never winked; and certainly this large bald man, with his imposing and serious expression, was the last person that the commandant could suspect of having pronounced these words, which recalled to him the disagreeable "quiproquo" of which Madame Pipelet had been the cause and the heroine. The waltz finished, Murphy returned to Rodolphe. "Well, monseigneur, this young man turned as if I had bitten him. These words, then, are magical?" "They are magical, my old Murphy; they have revealed to me what I wished to know." Rodolphe could do nothing more than to pity Madame d'Harville for a fault so much the more dangerous, as he had a vague presentiment that Sarah was an accomplice or confidant. At this discovery, he felt a grievous blow; he no longer doubted the cause of the sorrow of Madame d'Harville, whom he loved tenderly; jealousy was the reason, no doubt. His wife, endowed with charming qualities, sacrificed to a man every way unworthy. Master of a secret obtained by chance, incapable of abusing it, not having it in his power to try to enlighten Madame d'Harville, Rodolphe found himself obliged to remain a quiet spectator of the ruin of this young woman. He was aroused from these sad thoughts by M. de Graün. "If your highness will grant me a moment's conversation in the little saloon where there is nobody, I will have the honour to give you an account of the information I have obtained."

Rodolphe followed M. de Graün. "The only duchess whose name has any connexion with

the initials N. and L. is "Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, née de Noirmont," said the baron; "she is not here to-night. I have just seen her husband, M. de Lucenay, who set out on a journey to the East about five months since, which was to last more than a year; he returned unexpectedly two or three days since." The reader will recollect that, on his visit to the house in the Rue du Temple, Rodolphe had found near the door of the apartment of the quack César Bradamanté a handkerchief bathed in tears, richly bordered with lace, and in the corner of which he had remarked the letters N. and L. surmounted with a ducal coronet. By his orders, but ignorant of this fact, M. de Graün had inquired the names of the duchesses then in Paris, and obtained the information given above.

Rodolphe comprehended everything. He had no reason to interest himself about Madame de Lucenay; but he could not prevent himself from shuddering in thinking that, if she really had made a visit to the quack, this scoundrel, who was no other than the Abbé Polidori, possessed the name of this woman, whom he caused Tortillard to follow, and who could frightfully abuse the terrible secret that had placed the duchess in his power.

"Fortune is very singular sometimes, monseigneur," continued M. de Graün. "How is that?" "At the time that M. de Grangeneuve was giving me this information, and adding, maliciously enough, that the unlooked-for return of M. de Lucenay must have vexed the duchess and a very handsome young man, the most exquisite élegant of Paris, the Viscount de Saint Rémy, the ambassador came and asked me if I thought your highness would permit him to present to you the viscount who is here; he has just been attached to the legation of Gerolstein, and he will be too happy to pay his respects to your highness." Rodolphe could not repress a slight movement of impatience, and said,

"This is infinitely disagreeable to me, but I may not refuse. Tell the Count * * * to present M. de Saint Rémy." Notwithstanding his ill-humour, Rodolphe knew too well his duties as prince to be wanting in affability on this occasion. The Viscount de Saint Rémy approached, conducted by the Count * * *.

M. de Saint Rémy was a charming young man of twenty-five, slender, graceful, and of the most distinguished bearing and good looks; his complexion was very brown, but of velvet softness, clear and transparent as amber, as we remark in the portrait of Murillo; his black hair, parted over the left temple, curled gracefully around his face, half concealing the small white ears. His black eyes sparkled from their pearly bed, slightly shaded with that tint of blue, which gives to the Indian an expression so charming. By a freak of nature, the thickness of his "mustaches" made a striking contrast with the juvenile appearance of his chin and cheeks, as smooth as those of a young girl; he wore, through affectation, a cravat of black satin very low, so as to show the elegant contour of his throat, worthy of the young *Fluteur antique*.

A single pearl confined the long ends of his

cravat, a pearl of inestimable price, from its size, the purity of its form, and the splendour of its "orient" so dazzling, that an opal could not have been more splendidly watered. With perfect taste, the dress of M. de Saint Rémy harmonized fully with this jewel of magnificent simplicity. The figure and person of M. de Saint Rémy could never be forgotten, so much did it differ from the ordinary appearance of the "élégans." The splendour of his vehicles and horses was extreme; a bold and heavy better, the total of his race-book amounted annually to two or three thousand Louis. His house in the "Rue du Chaillot" was cited as a model of elegant sumptuousness; after exquisite fare, there was always heavy and ruinous play, where he lost often considerable sums with the most hospitable disregard; and yet it was known for a certainty that the patrimony of the viscount had been for a long time dissipated. To explain his incomprehensible prodigalities, the envious or malicious spoke, as Sarah had said, of the great wealth of Madame de Lucenay, but they forgot that, setting aside the vileness of this supposition, M. de Lucenay had naturally a control over the fortune of his wife, and that M. de Saint Rémy spent at least fifty thousand crowns, or two hundred thousand francs, a year. Others spoke of imprudent usury, for M. de Saint Rémy expected no farther inheritance. Others, finally, said he was *too* lucky on the turf, and whispered of trainers and jockeys bribed by him, to make the horses lose against which he had made heavy bets. But by far the greater part of the people of fashion troubled themselves very little as to the means which M. de Saint Rémy resorted to for the purpose of keeping up his pomp and ostentation. He belonged by birth to the best and most fashionable society; he was gay, courageous, witty, a good companion, easy to entertain; he gave excellent bachelor dinners, and took all the stakes they proposed to him: what more was necessary? The women adored him; he was young and handsome, gallant and magnificent on all the occasions where a man can be so with women of fashion; thus, the infatuation was such, that the obscurity with which he surrounded the source of the Pactolian river, which he used with a liberal hand, cast on his life a certain mysterious charm. It was said, "This devil of a Saint Rémy must have found the philosopher's stone."

On learning that he had caused himself to be attached to the legation of Gerolstein, other persons thought that he wished to make an honourable retreat. The Count ** said to Rodolphe, on presenting M. de Saint Rémy to him, "I have the honour to present to your highness M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy, attached to the legation of Gerolstein." The viscount made a profound salutation to Rodolphe, and said, "Your highness will deign to excuse the impatience which I experience to pay my court; perhaps I have been in too much haste to enjoy an honour to which I attach so much value!"

"I shall be very happy, sir, to see you at Gerolstein. Do you intend to go shortly?" "The stay of your highness in Paris renders me less anxious to set out." "The quiet contrast of our German court will surprise you much sir,

accustomed as you are to live in, Paris." "I dare assure your highness that the kindness that is shown me, and which I hope will be continued, will alone prevent me from regretting Paris." "It shall not be failure in me, sir, should you not always think so, during the time you pass at Gerolstein;" and Rodolphe made a slight inclination with his head, which announced to M. de Saint Rémy that the presentation was finished; with a profound bow, he retired.

Rodolphe was a great physiognomist, and subject to sympathies or aversions almost always justified; after the few words exchanged with M. de Saint Rémy, without being able to explain the reason, he felt for him a sort of involuntary aversion. He found in his looks something profoundly cunning, and a dangerous physiognomy.

* * * * *

We shall meet M. de Saint Rémy under circumstances which will contrast terribly with the brilliant position he occupied on his presentation to Rodolphe, where the realities of the presentiments of this last will be proved.

This presentation over, Rodolphe, reflecting on the strange "rencontres" that chance had brought about, descended into the winter-garden; the supper hour had arrived, the saloons were almost deserted; the most retired spot in the conservatory was in the midst of some shrubbery, at the angle of two walls, that an enormous banana, surrounded with climbing plants, almost entirely concealed: a small side door, hidden by the trellis, and leading to the refreshment-room by a long corridor, was half open, not far from this tree.

Concealed by this screen of verdure, Rodolphe seated himself in this spot. He was for some moments plunged in a profound revery, when his name, pronounced by a well-known voice, made him shudder.

Sarah, seated on the other side of the foliage which concealed Rodolphe, was talking in English with her brother Tom. Rodolphe listened attentively to the following conversation. "The marchioness has gone for a moment to the ball of the Baron de Norval; she has, happily, gone off without being able to speak to Rodolphe, who sought her, for I dread always the influence he has over her; an influence which I have had so much trouble to combat, and partly to destroy. In fine, this rival, whom I have always feared from presentiment, and who can, by-and-by, so much injure my projects—this rival will be lost to-morrow. Listen to me—this is serious, Tom." "You are mistaken, Rodolphe has never thought of the marchioness." "It is time I should give you some explanations on this subject. Many things took place during your last journey; and it is necessary that we should act sooner than I thought—even to-night, when we leave here. This conversation is indispensable. Happily, we are alone." "I listen."

"Before she saw Rodolphe, this woman, I am sure, never loved. I do not know for what reason she evinces an unconquerable aversion to her husband, who adores her. There is a mystery there, that I have endeavoured to penetrate in vain. The presence of Rodolphe had

excited in the heart of Clémence a thousand new emotions. I stifled this growing love by overwhelming revelations touching the prince. But the need of love was awakened in the bosom of the marchioness. Meeting, at my house, with this Charles Robert, she was struck with his beauty, struck as one is at the sight of a picture; this man is, unfortunately, as 'niais' as he is handsome, but there is something touching in his looks: I praised the nobleness of his heart, the elevation of his character. I knew the natural goodness of Madame d'Harville; I coloured M. Robert with the most interesting misfortunes; I recommended him to be always very sad, and sighing, and, above all, to speak but little. He has followed my counsels. Thanks to his talent for singing, to his figure, and, above all, his appearance of sorrow, he has almost made himself beloved by Madame d'Harville, who has thus given a change to this need of love which the sight of Rodolphe had alone awakened. Do you understand now?"

"Perfectly—continue." "Robert and Madame d'Harville only seeing one another intimately at my house, twice a week, we practised music, we three, in the morning. The handsome unfortunate sighed, said some tender words in a low tone; he slipped in her hands two or three billets. I feared still more his prose than his words; but a woman is always indulgent for the first declarations she receives; those of my protégé did him no harm; the most important thing was to obtain a meeting. This little marchioness had more principle than love, or, rather, she had not love enough to forget principle. Unknown to her, there existed always in the bottom of her heart a 'souvenir' of Rodolphe, which watched, as I may say, over her, and combated the feeble 'penchant' for M. Charles Robert—a 'penchant' much more seeming than real—but kept alive by her lively interest in the imaginary misfortunes of M. Charles Robert, and by the incessant exaggeration of my praises of this Apollo without brains. Finally, Clémence, conquered by the profoundly desperate air of her unfortunate adorer, decided one day to give him the rendezvous so much desired." "She made you, then, her confidant?" "She avowed to me her attachment to M. Charles Robert, that's all; I did not wish to know anything more; it would have annoyed me. But he, ravished with happiness, or, rather, pride, told me of his happiness, without, however, telling me the day, or the place of rendezvous." "How did you know it?" "Karl, by my orders, went the next day and the day after, very early, to hide near his door and follow him. The second day, towards noon, our lover took, in a carriage, the road to an unknown quarter, Rue du Temple. He went into a house of a bad appearance; he remained there an hour and a half, and then went away. Karl waited a long time to see if any one came out after M. Charles Robert. No one came: the marchioness had failed in her promise. I knew it the next morning from the lover, as much irritated as disappointed. I counselled him to redouble his despair. The pity of Clémence was once more touched: a new rendezvous, but all in vain, as the first. A last time, however, she came to the door: some progress.

You see how this woman struggles—and why! Because I am sure it is that which causes my hatred; she has always in the bottom of her heart, and without knowing it, a *'pensée'* for Rodolphe, which seems thus to protect her. Finally, 'la marquise' has given a rendezvous for to-morrow: this time, I doubt not, she will go. The Duke de Lucenay has so grossly ridiculed this young man, that the marchioness, quite upset by the humiliation of her lover, has granted from pity what, perhaps, she would not otherwise have accorded; this time, I repeat, she will keep her promise." "What are your projects?"

"This woman obeys a kind of charitable instinct, exalted, but not in love; Charles Robert is so little made to understand the delicacy of sentiment which this night has dictated the resolution of the marchioness, that to-morrow he will wish to profit by this rendezvous, and he will ruin himself completely in the mind of Clémence, who gives herself up to this compromising step without love, without passion, and only from pity. In a word, I doubt not she goes there to do an act of courageous interest, but perfectly calm and certain not to forget for a moment her duties. This Charles Robert never can conceive this; the marchioness will hold him in aversion; and, her illusion destroyed, she will fall under the influence of her recollections of Rodolphe, which, I am sure, lie constantly hidden at the bottom of her heart."

"Well!" "Well! I wish that she should be lost to him forever; he would have, I do not doubt, betrayed sooner or later the friendship of M. d'Harville in responding to the love of Clémence; but he will hold her in horror, if he knows her capable of a fault of which he has not been the object; this is an unpardonable crime for a man; in fine, making a pretext of the affection which binds him to M. d'Harville, we will never see again this woman, who has unworthily deceived this friend he so much loves." "It is the husband, then, that you wish to inform?" "Yes, and to-night, if you are of my opinion. From what Clémence has told me, he has vague suspicions without knowing on whom to fix them. It is midnight—we will leave the ball; you get out at the first 'café,' and write to M. d'Harville that his wife is going to-morrow, at one o'clock, to the Rue du Temple, No. 17. He is jealous—he will surprise Clémence—you can guess the rest!" "It is an abominable action!" said the gentleman, coldly. "You are scrupulous, Tom?" "By-and-by I'll do as you wish; but I repeat to you, that it is an abominable action." "You consent, notwithstanding?" "Yes; this night M. d'Harville shall be informed of all. And—but—it seems to me that there is some one there behind the shrubbery!" said Tom, speaking in a low voice. "I thought I heard some one move." "Go and look!" said Sarah with inquietude. Tom got up, walked around, and saw no one. Rodolphe had just disappeared through the little door of which we have spoken. "I am deceived," said Tom, on returning; "there is no one there." "That is what I thought." "Listen, Sarah. I do not think this woman as dangerous as you do for your future projects; Rodolphe has certain principles that he will never transgress. The young girl he has conducted

to this farm, about six weeks since, he disguised as a workman; this creature, whom he has surrounded with comforts, to whom he is giving a good education, and whom he has visited several times, inspires me with more fears. We are ignorant who she is, although she seems to belong to an obscure class of society. But the rare beauty with which she is said to be endowed, the care with which Rodolphe has conducted her to this village, the growing interest he has for her, all prove that this affection is not without importance. Thus I have gone ahead of your wishes. To get rid of this obstacle, much more real, I think, it has been necessary to act with great caution, to be well informed concerning the people of this farm, and of the habits of this young girl. This information I have; the moment to act is come; chance has thrown in my way this horrible old woman, who had my address. Her relations with the kind of brigands who attacked us the night of our excursion in 'la cité' will powerfully serve us. All is provided—there will be no proof against us; and, besides, if this creature, as it appears, belongs to the working class, she will not hesitate between our offers, and the fate, even brilliant that she dreamed of, for the prince has guarded a profound incognito; in fine, to-morrow this question shall be solved; if not, we shall see." "These two obstacles out of the way, Tom, then our grand project."

"It offers difficulties, but it may succeed." "Acknowledge that it will have one chance the more, if we execute it at the moment in which Rodolphe will be doubly overwhelmed by the disgrace of the conduct of Madame d'Harville, and by the disappearance of this creature, for whom he is so much interested!" "I think so. But if this last hope escapes us, then I shall be free," said Tom, looking at Sarah with a gloomy air. "You shall be free! You shall no longer renew the prayers which twice have, in spite of me, suspended my vengeance!" Then, looking at the crapes which surrounded his hat, and his black gloves, Tom added, smiling in a sinister manner, "I await always—I—you well know that I have worn this mourning for sixteen years—and I will never leave it off until—" Sarah, whose features expressed involuntary fear, hastened to interrupt her brother, and said to him, with anxiety, "I tell you that you shall be free, Tom, for then this profound confidence, which until now has sustained me in circumstances so diverse, because it has been justified by more than human knowledge, will have totally abandoned me. But, until then, there is no danger, however slight in appearance, that I do not wish to guard against. Success often depends on the smallest causes. Obstacles not very serious may present themselves, as I am about arriving at the goal; I wish to have the field clear; I shall break them. My means are odious; so be it! Have I been eye-led—I?" cried Sarah, involuntarily raising her voice. "Silence! they are returning from supper," said Tom. "Since you think it useful to advise the Marquis d'Harville of the meeting to-morrow, let us go, it is late. The advanced hour of the night at which this notice will be given him, will prove its importance." Tom and Sarah left the ball of the ambassadress of ***.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MEETING.

WISKING, at all hazards, to inform Madame d'Harville of the danger which she ran, Rodolphe, leaving the embassy without waiting the end of the conversation between Tom and Sarah, was ignorant of the plot hatched by them against Fleur de Marie, and the imminent peril which menaced this young girl. Notwithstanding his efforts, Rodolphe, unfortunately, was not able to save the marchioness, as he had hoped. She, at her departure from the ball, had intended to appear for a moment at Madame de Nerval's; but, overcome by the emotions which agitated her, Madame d'Harville had not the courage to go to this second fête, and returned home. This, unfortunately, ruined all. M. de Gratin, as well as most of the other guests of the Countess ***, was invited to Madame de Nerval's; Rodolphe drove with him there rapidly, with directions to seek out Madame d'Harville, and to inform her that the prince desired to say to her that night some words of the greatest interest; he would be on foot before the Hotel d'Harville, and that he would open the door of the carriage to speak to her, while her people were opening the "porte cochère." After losing much time in seeking her, the baron returned. She had not appeared. Rodolphe was in despair; he had wisely thought that he should, first of all, advise the marchioness of the treason to which she would be a victim; for then the accusation of Sarah, which he could not prevent, would pass for an indignant calumny. He was too late: this infamous letter was sent to the marquis at one hour after midnight.

* * * * *

The next morning M. d'Harville was walking slowly in his sleeping apartment, furnished with elegant simplicity, and only ornamented with a panoply of arms, and an "étagère" furnished with books. The bed had not been used, yet the silken counterpane hung in tatters; a chair, and a little table of ebony with twisted legs, were overturned near the fireplace; on the carpet were seen the fragments of a crystal goblet, wax candles half crushed, and a candlestick with two branches thrown in the corner. This disorder seemed to have been caused by a violent struggle. M. d'Harville was about thirty years of age, a manly face of much character, an expression ordinarily agreeable and pleasant, but then contracted, pale, and violent; he wore his dress of the previous evening; his neck was bare, his waistcoat open; his shirt, torn, appeared here and there stained with some drops of blood; his brown hair, usually curled, fell rough and tangled on his livid forehead. After having walked up and down for a long time, his arms crossed, his head down, his look fixed and glaring, M. d'Harville stopped suddenly before the fireless hearth. He took from the marble chimney-piece this letter, which he read again, with devouring attention, by the dull light of this winter morning. "To-morrow, at one o'clock, your wife has an engagement in the Rue du Temple, No. 17. Follow her, and you will know all—Happy husband!" As he read these words, already so many times perused, his lips,

blue with cold, seemed convulsively to spell letter by letter this fatal billet. At this moment the door opened; a valet-de-chambre entered. This servant, already old, had gray hair, an honest and good face. The marquis turned his head roughly, without changing his position, still holding the letter between his hands. "What do you want?" said he, crossly, to the domestic. He, without answering, contemplated with an air of sorrowful surprise, the disorder of the chamber; then, regarding attentively his master, he cried, "Blood on your shirt! Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! monsieur, you must be wounded. You were alone. Why did you not ring, as usual, when you have felt the—" "Go away." "But, Monsieur le Marquis, you don't think; your fire is out; it is very cold here; and, above all—after—your—"

"Will you be silent! Leave me!" "But, Monsieur le Marquis," said the valet, trembling, "you have ordered M. Doublet to be here this morning at half past ten; he is here with the notary." "It is true," said the marquis, bitterly, recovering himself. "When one is rich, he must think of business. It is so fine, fortune! Let M. Doublet go into my cabinet."

"He is already there, Monsieur le Marquis." "Give me some clothes—directly I shall go out." "But, Monsieur le Marquis—" "Do what I tell you, Joseph," said the marquis, in a softer voice. "Has any one gone into my wife's room yet?" "I do not think Madame la Marquise has yet rung." "Let me be advised as soon as she does." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "Tell Philip to come and help you; you will never finish!" "But, monsieur, wait until I have arranged things a little," answered Joseph, sadly. "They would see this disorder, and could not comprehend what could have happened this night to Monsieur le Marquis." "And if they did comprehend—it would be very shocking, would it not?" answered the marquis, in a tone of mournful pleasantry. "Ah! monsieur," cried Joseph; "God be praised! no one suspects—" "No one! no! none," answered the marquis, gloomily.

While Joseph was occupied in repairing the disorder of the room, the marquis went straight to the panoply of which we have spoken, examined attentively, for some minutes, the arms which composed it, made a gesture of ominous satisfaction, and said to Joseph, "I am sure that you have forgotten to clean my guns which are up there in my hunting equipage." "Monsieur le Marquis has not spoken to me about it," said Joseph, astonished. "Yes; but you have forgotten." "I protest to Monsieur le Marquis—" "They ought to be in good condition!" "It is scarcely a month since they were brought from the gunsmith's!" "No matter; as soon as I am dressed, hand them down to me; I shall go shooting to-morrow, perhaps; I want to examine these guns."

The room arranged, a second valet-de-chambre came to assist Joseph. The toilet finished, the marquis entered into the cabinet, where M. Doublet (his steward) and a notary's clerk awaited him. "This is the act which we have come to read to M. le Marquis," said the steward; "it only requires your signature." "Have you read it, Monsieur Doublet?" "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "In that case, it is suffi-

cient—I sign." He signed; the clerk went out. "By means of this acquisition, Monsieur le Marquis," said M. Doublet, with a triumphant manner, "your ground-rents, on good security, is not less than 126,000 francs in sacks. Do you know that this is very uncommon, monsieur, a revenue of 126,000 francs ground-rent?"

"I am a very happy man, am I not, Monsieur Doublet? 126,000 francs ground-rent! There is no happiness at all comparable!" "Without reckoning the portfolio of M. le Marquis—without reckoning—" "Certainly, and without reckoning—so many other sources of happiness still!" "God be praised! Monsieur le Marquis, for you want nothing: youth, riches, health—every happiness united; and among them," said M. Doublet, smiling agreeably, "or, rather, at their head, I place that of being the husband of Madame la Marquise, and of having a charming little girl that resembles a cherubim." M. d'Harville cast a sinister look at the intendant. We shall not attempt to paint the expression of savage irony with which he said to M. Doublet, striking him familiarly on the shoulder, "With 126,000 francs ground-rent, and a wife like mine, and a child that looks like a cherubim, there is nothing left to wish for, is there?" "Eh! eh! Monsieur le Marquis," naively answered the steward, "there remains to wish for a long life—to marry mademoiselle your daughter, and to become a grandfather. To be a grandfather is what I desire with all my heart for M. le Marquis, as I do that Madame la Marquise shall be a grandmother and great-grandmother." "This good Monsieur Doublet, who dreams of Philemon and Baucis, he is always so very 'apropos.'" "Monsieur le Marquis is too good. He has only to command me—" "Only! Ah! if, however—how much have you in hand?" "Nineteen thousand three hundred and some francs for current expenses, M. le Marquis, without reckoning what is in the bank." "You will bring me this morning ten thousand francs in gold, and you will give them to Joseph, if I am out." "This morning?" "This morning." "In one hour the money shall be here. M. le Marquis, has he anything more to say to me?" "No, Monsieur Doublet." "126,000 francs sent in bags! in bags!" repeated the steward, as he went out. "It is a fine day for me. I feared so much that this farm, which suits us so exactly, might escape us. Your servant, Monsieur le Marquis."

Scarcely was he gone, than M. d'Harville fell upon his chair, quite overcome; he leaned his arms on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands. For the first time since he had received the fatal letter, he could weep. "Oh!" said he, "cruel derision of destiny, which has made me rich! What shall I put in this golden frame now! My shame—the infamy of Clémence! Infamy that the world, perhaps, will cast back on the brow of my child! Shall I conceal it? shall I have pity—of—no, no! blood! blood! revenge will save from ridicule! I now understand her aversion. The miserable—" Then stopping suddenly, as if struck with a sudden thought, he continued, in a mournful tone, "Her aversion! Oh! I know well the cause; I inspire her with horror—I frighten her!" And, after a long silence, "But is it my fault? Must

she deceive me on that account! Instead of hatred, is it not pity that I merit?" continued he, arousing himself by degrees. "No, no, blood! both—both! for she, without doubt, has told all this to the other." This thought redoubled the fury of the marquis. He raised his two clinched fists towards heaven; then passing his burning hand over his eyes, and feeling the necessity of calming himself before his people, he entered into his sleeping room in apparent tranquillity. He found Joseph there. "Well, the guns?" "Here they are, M. le Marquis; they are in perfect order." "I will see. Has my wife rung yet?" "I do not know, M. le Marquis." "Go and see." M. d'Harville hastened to take from the gun-box a small powder-horn, some balls and percussion-caps, then relocked the box and kept the key, after which he went to the panoply, and took a pair of pistols of *Manlon*, of small size, loaded them, and put them in the pocket of his morning coat. At this moment Joseph came back. "Monsieur, you can see madame." "Has Madame d'Harville ordered her carriage?" "No, Monsieur le Marquis; Mademoiselle Juliette said, before me, to the coachman, who came to get his orders for the morning, that as it was cold and dry, madame would go out on foot—if she went out." "Very well. Ah! I forget. If I go shooting, it will be to-morrow or after. Tell Williams to examine the little green briska this morning; you hear me!" "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis. Will you not have your cane?" "No. Is there not a hack-stand near?" "Very near; at the corner of the Rue de Lille."

* * * * *

On leaving his room, instead of visiting Madame d'Harville, he only said to her femme-de-chambre: "You will tell the marchioness that I desired to speak to her this morning, but that I am obliged to go out for a moment; if it is agreeable to her to breakfast with me, I shall return by noon; if not, never mind. Thinking that I will return, she will believe herself more free," said M. d'Harville to himself, and he walked to the hack-stand near his house. "Coachman, by the hour!"

"Yes, bourgeois; it is half past eleven o'clock. Where shall we go?" "Rue de Belle Ouse, at the corner of the Rue Saint Dominique, alongside of a garden-wall you will find there: you will wait."

"Yes, bourgeois." M. d'Harville let down the curtains. The carriage was driven off, and soon arrived opposite the house of the marquis. From this place no one could go out of his doors without being seen by him. Twelve o'clock struck at Saint Thomas d'Aquin, when the door of the Hotel d'Harville was slowly opened, and the marchioness came out. "Already! Ah! what attention! she feared to make the other one wait." Clémence wore a black hat, covered with a blonde veil of the same colour, and a "Douillette" of purple silk; her immense cashmere shawl of deep blue reached to the skirt of her dress, which she raised gracefully to cross the street. Thanks to this movement, one could just have a glimpse of a pretty little foot, in its beautiful boot of Turkish satin.

* * * * *

The marquis partly pulled down the blind,

and said to the coachman, "You see that lady in the black hat and blue shawl, who is walking along the wall?" "Yes, bourgeois." "Drive slowly, and follow her. If she gets to the hack-stand, follow the carriage she gets into." "Yes, bourgeois." "Stop, stop, this is amusing!"

Madame d'Harville went to the hack-stand, and got into one of the carriages. The coachman of M. d'Harville followed her. At the end of a few moments, to the great astonishment of the marquis, the coachman took the road to the church of Saint Thomas d'Aquin, and stopped there. "Bourgeois, the lady has just got out at the church. 'Sapristé! what a fine little foot; all the same—it is very amusing!' A thousand different thoughts agitated M. d'Harville; at first he thought that his wife, seeing that she was followed, wished to put a stop to the pursuit. Then he thought that perhaps the letter was a calumny. If Clémence was culpable, why this false appearance of piety? was it not a sacrilegious jesting? For a moment M. d'Harville had a ray of hope, so great was the contrast between this apparent piety and the act of which his wife was accused. This illusive consolation endured but for a short time. His coachman leaned over and whispered, "Bourgeois, the little lady has returned to the carriage." "Follow her." "Yes, bourgeois! very amusing! very amusing!" The hack reached the quays, the Hotel d'Ville, the Rue Saint Avoys, and, finally, the Rue du Temple.

"Bourgeois," said the coachman, "they have stopped at No. 17; we are at No. 13; shall we stop also?" "Yes." "Bourgeois, the little lady has gone into No. 17." "Open the door." "Yes, bourgeois." Some seconds after M. d'Harville entered close on the steps of his wife.

CHAPTER XVII.

AN ANGEL.

MADAME D'HARVILLE entered the house. Attracted by curiosity, Madame Pipelet, Alfred, and the oysterwoman were standing in the door of the lodge. The staircase was so dark that, on coming in from the light, it could not be seen. The marchioness, obliged to address herself to Madame Pipelet, said to her, in a voice trembling with emotion, "Monsieur Charles, madame!" "Monsieur who?" repeated the old woman, feigning not to hear her, so as to allow her husband and the oysterwoman time to examine her features through her veil. "I ask for—Monsieur Charles—madame," answered Clémence, holding down her head, in endeavouring to conceal her face from the looks of those who examined her with such insolent curiosity.

"Ah! Monsieur Charles! very good; you speak so low that I didn't hear. Well! my little lady, since you wish to see M. Charles, a fine young man, just so—go up straight ahead; it is the door opposite." The marchioness, overwhelmed with confusion, put her foot on the first step. "Eh! eh! eh!" added the old woman, chuckling; "it appears that it is all right to-day. 'Vive la noce,' and go along!" "That doesn't prevent him from being an amateur, the commandant," added the oysterwom-

an. If it had not been necessary to repossess the lodge where these creatures were stationed, Madame d'Harville, almost expiring with fright and shame, would have left immediately. She made a last effort, and reached the landing-place. What was her surprise! She found herself face to face with Rodolphe, who, placing a purse in her hands, said quickly, "Your husband knows all; he follows you." At this moment the sharp voice of Madame Pipelet was heard crying,

"Where are you going to, sir?" "It is he!" said Rodolphe; and he added rapidly, pushing her towards the staircase leading to the second story, "Go up to the garret: you have just come to succour an unfortunate family; they are called Morel." "Monsieur, you shall pass over my body rather than go up without saying where you are going to!" cried Madame Pipelet, barring the passage to Madame d'Harville.

"I follow the lady who has just entered," said the marquis.

"That is different; pass on." Having heard an unusual noise, the commandant half opened his door. Rodolphe entered quickly, and shut himself in with him at the moment Madame d'Harville reached the landing-place. Fearing that he might be recognised by the marquis, he profited by this occasion surely to escape him.

M. Charles Robert, magnificently dressed in his flowery robe-de-chambre, and his Greek cap of embroidered velvet, remained stupified at the sight of Rodolphe, whom he had not perceived at the ball, and who was more modestly dressed than ever. "Sir, what is the meaning—" "Silence!" said Rodolphe in a low voice, but with such an expression of anguish that M. Charles Robert was silent. A violent noise, like that of a body which fell and rolled down the stairs, resounded through the staircase. "The unfortunate being has killed her!" cried Rodolphe. "Killed! who? But what is all this?" said M. Charles in a low voice, and turned pale. Without answering him, Rodolphe descended the door. He saw descending in great haste and limping, the little Tortillard; he held in his hand the purse of red silk that Rodolphe had just given to Madame d'Harville. The first step of Madame d'Harville could be heard as well as the heavier one of her husband, who continued to follow her to the upper story. Not comprehending how Tortillard could have this purse in his possession, but a little reassured, Rodolphe said to M. Robert, "Do not stir from hence; you have been near ruining everything—" "But, monsieur," answered M. Robert, in an impatient manner, "will you tell me what this signifies? Who are you, and by what right—" "This signifies, sir, that the husband of Madame d'Harville knows everything; that he has followed his wife to your door, and that he follows her up there!" "Ah! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried M. Charles Robert, joining his hands in terror; "but what will she do up there?" "Never mind; remain in your room, and do not come out until the 'portière' notifies you." Leaving M. Robert as much frightened as stupified, Rodolphe descended to the lodge. "Well! say now!" cried Madame Pipelet, with a radiant air; "'ça chauffe,' it grows warm! there is a gentleman who has followed the little lady. It is without doubt the

husband, the *dandelion*. I guessed that right away, and I sent him up. He will massacre the commandant; that will make a noise in the neighbourhood; people will crowd to see the house, as they did to see No. 36, where there was an assassination." "My dear Madame Pipelet, will you render me a great service?" and Rodolphe put five "louis" in the hands of the portière. "When this lady comes down, ask her how she found these poor Morels; tell her she does a good act in helping them, as she had promised to come and get some information concerning them."

Madame Pipelet looked at the money, and then at Rodolphe, in amazement! "How! Monsieur, this gold—is for me! And this little lady—she is not, then, at the commandant's?" "The gentleman who followed her is the husband. Advised in time, the poor woman went up to the Morels, as if she came to bring them alms; do you comprehend?" "If I comprehend, I must aid in deceiving the husband: that suits me—like a glove! You shall say I do this as if I had done nothing else all my life. I say!"

Here could have been seen the "chapeau tromblou" of Monsieur Pipelet, raising itself suddenly in the shade of the lodge. "Anastasia," said Alfred, gravely, "I see you have respect for nothing on this earth; just like M. César Bradamanté—there are some things, which should never be agitated even in the charms of intimacy." "Come, come, 'vieux cheri,' don't play the prude with your eyes like loto balls; you see I am only joking. Do you not know that there is not a person in the world who can boast of—enough—sufficient. If I am obliging, it is only to oblige our new lodger, who is so good." Turning to Rodolphe, he said, "You shall see me work! Will you hang in the corner there, behind the curtain! hurry! I have them now."

Madame Pipelet hastened to conceal himself. M. d'Harville descended, she holding to his arm. When they arrived opposite the lodge, the face of M. d'Harville expressed "I found happiness, mingled with astonishment and confusion. Clémence was calm and pale."

"Well! my good lady," cried Madame Pipelet, coming out of the lodge, "have you seen these poor Morels? I hope that touches your heart! Ah! mon Dieu, it is a good work you are doing there. I told you they were much to be pitied the last time you came for information. Be easy, you never can do enough for such good people—is it not so, Alfred?" Alfred, whose prudery and natural integrity revolted at the idea of entering into this anti-conjugal complot, answered vaguely, by a kind of negative growl. Madame Pipelet continued: "Alfred has the cramp in the stomach, otherwise he would tell you, as I do, that these poor people will pray to the bon Dieu for you, my worthy lady!" M. d'Harville looked at his wife with admiration, and repeated, "An angel! an angel! Oh! calumny!" "An angel! You are right, monsieur, and a good angel of the 'bon Dieu,' what's more!" "My friend, let us go," said Madame d'Harville, who suffered horribly from the constraint she had imposed on herself since her entrance into the house; she felt her strength giving way. "Let us go," said the

marquis. He added, at the moment of leaving the alley, "Clémence, I need pardon and pity!" "Who has not need?" said she with a sigh.

Rodolphe came out of his retreat, profoundly affected at this scene of terror, mingled with ridicule and vulgarity; a singular "denouement" of a mysterious drama, which had raised so many diverse passions.

"Well!" said Madame Pipelet, "I hope I did him nicely—the dandelion! And your furniture, Monsieur Rodolphe, they have not brought it yet!" "I am going to attend to it. You can go and tell the commandant, now, he can come down." "True. I say, now, ain't it a farce! It appears as if he might have hired the room for the Roi de Prusse. It is well done—with his shabby twelve francs a month!" Rodolphe went out. "I say, Alfred!" said Madame Pipelet, "the commandant's turn now! I am going to have a good laugh!" She ascended to the room of M. Charles Robert; rang at the door, which he opened. "Commandant!" and Anastasia carried the back of her hand in military style to her periwig, "I come to let you out of prison. They are gone arm in arm, the husband and wife, right under your nose! All the same, you escaped a fine—thanks to M. Rodolphe; you ought to be very grateful." "Is it the slender gentleman with mustaches who is M. Rodolphe?" "Himself." "Who is this man?" "This man!" cried Madame Pipelet, in a vexed manner; "he is worth any other! two others! He is a travelling clerk, resident of this house, who has but one room, and who is not mean—not he! He has given me six francs for his 'ménage,' six francs! and right off! Once more I say, six francs, without bargaining!" "Very well—very well; here is the key." "Shall I make a fire to-morrow, commandant?" "No." "After to-morrow?" "No, no." "Well, commandant, do you remember? I told you that you would not pay your expenses." M. Charles Robert cast a look of contempt on the portière, and went out, not being able to comprehend how a travelling clerk could have been informed of his rendezvous with the Marchioness d'Harville. At the moment he went out of the 'allée' he met the little Tortillard, who came in hobbling. "Here you are, 'mauvais sujet!' said Madame Pipelet. "Has the Borgnesse been here for me?" asked the child, of the portière, without replying to her. "La Chouette! No; horrid monster! Why should she come to seek for you?" "Stop! to take me to the country, then!" said Tortillard, swinging on the door of the lodge. "And your master?" "My father asked M. Bradamanté to give me a holiday—to go to the country—the country—the country!" sang out the son of Bras-Rouge, drumming on the window of the lodge.

"Will you stop, brat! you will break my glasses! But here is a hack."

"Oh! good, it is La Chouette," said the child; "what happiness to go in a carriage!" In effect, through the glass and on the red curtain inside could be seen the earthly profile of the Borgnesse. She made a sign to Tortillard, who ran and jumped into the vehicle. La Chouette was not alone. In another corner of the carriage, wrapped up in an old cloak with a fur collar, his features half concealed by a black

silk nightcap which came down to his eyebrows, might have been seen the *Maitre d'Ecole*. His red eyelids left visible two white immovable eyes, without pupils, and which rendered still more frightful his scarred visage, which was marbled by the cold with blue and livid seams. "Come, child, squat down on the legs of my man; you will keep him warm," said *La Borgnesse* to *Tortillard*, who crept like a dog between the legs of the *Maitre d'Ecole* and *La Chouette*. "Now," said the coachman, "to the *Borqueval* farm, is it not, *La Chouette*? You shall see that I know how to drive a carriage." "Above all, whip your horse," said the *Maitre d'Ecole*. "Be easy, Ne-eyes—he will run all the way to the cross-road." "Shall I give you some advice!" said the *Maitre d'Ecole*. "Which?" answered the coachman. "Drive fast through the barriers, otherwise they may recognise you." "I will keep my eyes open," said the other, mounting his seat. The above conversation was in *Argot*, and if we again approach this horrible language, it is only because it shows that the shain coachman was a brigand, a worthy companion of the *Maitre d'Ecole*. The carriage left the *Rue du Temple*. Two hours after, at the close of day, this vehicle stopped before a wooden cross, marking a deserted and stony road which led to the *Bouqueval* farm, where the *Goualeuse* resided, under the protection of *Madame Georges*.

PART III.

CHAPTER I.

AN ECOLOGUE.

FIVE o'clock struck at the church of the little village of *Bouqueval*; the cold was sharp, the sky serene; the sun, sinking slowly behind the tall, leafless trees which crowned the heights of *Econue*, shed a purple tint over the horizon, and cast his pale and oblique rays over the vast field, hardened by frost. In the country, each season presents a different and charming aspect. Sometimes the dazzling snow changes everything into immense landscapes of alabaster, which display their immaculate splendours under a sky of rosy gray.

Then, sometimes, at dusk, ascending the hills, or descending into the valleys, the belated farmer is returning home; horse, cloak, cap, all is covered with snow: sharp is the frost, icy is the wind, dark is the advancing night; but there, there, in the midst of the naked trees, the little windows of the farm are gayly illuminated; its tall brick chimneys cast towards the skies a thick column of smoke, which says to the master he is waited for; sparkling fire, rustic supper, then the evening chat, quiet and peaceful repose, while the wind whistles without, and the dogs scattered over the plains bark, and are answered in the distance. Sometimes, in the morning, the hoar-frost suspends to the trees its girandoles of crystal which the winter's sun causes to sparkle with all the diamond splendour of the prism; the damp, rich ground lies in long furrows, where hides the timid hare, or lightly spring the active partridge. Here and there is heard the melancholy tinkling of the bell of the master ram of a large flock of sheep grazing on the green patches in narrow lanes, while, well

wrapped in his gray mantle, the shepherd, seated at the foot of a tree, sings in weaving a basket of oster. Sometimes the scene becomes more animated; the echo sends back the faint sounds of the horn and the cries of the hounds; a frightened fawn springs suddenly from the borders of the forest, makes for the plains, flying with terror; she is lost in the horizon. The horns and the bayings draw near; dogs, spotted and white, come out in their turn from the thick forest; they run on the brown earth, they run on the fallow ground; the nose to the earth, they follow, crying in the scent of the fawn. After them appear hunters dressed in red, bending over the arched necks of their swift coursers; they animate the hunt with their horns and cries. This all passes like a whirlwind, like lightning, the noise ceases; by degrees all is quiet, dogs, horses, hunters disappear at a distance in the wood where the fawn has fled for shelter. Then the quiet is again established; then the profound silence of the plain, the tranquillity of the broad horizon, are only interrupted by the monotonous song of the shepherd.

These representations, these rural situations abound in the environs of the village of *Bouqueval*, which, notwithstanding its proximity to Paris, is situated in a kind of desert only approached by cross-roads. Concealed during the summer in the midst of trees, like a nest in some foliage, the farm where the *Goualeuse* had retired, appeared quite entire without its veil of verdure. The course of the little river frozen by the cold, resembled a long riband of unwrought silver, unrolled in the midst of meadows always green, where some fine cows grazed in slowly regaining their stables. Brought back by the approach of night, flights of pigeons settled down successively on the sharp roof of the pigeon-house; the immense walnut-trees, which during the summer shaded the court and the farm-buildings, then despoiled of their leaves, permitted the tiled and thatched roofs to be seen, covered with velvet-like moss of emerald green.

A heavy cart, drawn by three stout horses, thick-set, with heavy manes, shining coats, harnessed with blue collars, trimmed with small bells and tufts of red wool, was bringing a load of wheat from one of the mills of the plain. This heavy vehicle arrived in the court through the large door, while a large flock of sheep crowded through one of the side entrances. Man and beast seemed impatient to escape from the coldness of the night, and to taste the delights of repose. The horses neighed joyously at the sight of the stables; the sheep bleated in besieging the door of the warm sheepfolds; the workmen cast an impatient glance through the windows of the kitchen, where was preparing the evening meal. There existed in this farm rare and extreme order—a neatness minute and unusual. Instead of being covered with dry mud, scattered here and there, and exposed to the inclemency of the season, the harrows, ploughs, rollers, and other implements of husbandry, of which some were of an entire new invention, were arranged neatly under a large shed, where the wagons came and placed the harness of their horses. Vast, neat, well planted, the sanded court did not present to view those heaps of manure, those ponds of stagnant water, which disfigure the finest farms of *La Beauce* or *La Brie*. The lower court, surrounded by a green trellis, received all the feathered tribe,

and these came in every night by a small door opening on the fields. Without descending any farther on the details, we will only say, that in everything this farm passed, for good reasons, throughout the country for a model-farm, as much from the order which was established there, as by the excellence of its agriculture and crops, and by the happiness and morality of the numerous persons who made the place of value.

We will tell by-and-by the reason of this superiority so prosperous. In the mean while, we will conduct the reader to the trellised door of the lower court, which yielded in nothing to the rest of the farm, by the heatness of its roosts, coops, and its little canal encased with small stones, where flowed constantly pure and limpid water, just then carefully cleared from the ice which might obstruct it.

A kind of revolution suddenly seemed to break out among the inhabitants of this lower court. The hens left their perches cackling; the turkeys gobbled; the Guinea-fowls screamed; the pigeons abandoned the roof of the pigeon-house, and lit on the sand, cooing.

The arrival of Fleur de Marie was the cause of all these gay follies. Greuze or Watteau never could have imagined a more charming model, if the cheeks of the poor Goualeuse had been rosier and fuller. Yet, notwithstanding her paleness, and the thinness of her oval-shaped face, the expression of her features, the "ensemble" of her person, the grace of her attitude, would yet have been worthy of the pencils of the great painters we have named.

The little round hat of Fleur de Marie displayed her fine forehead, with its bands of flaxen hair. Like almost all the peasant girls of the environs of Paris, under this hat she wore, arrayed very smoothly, and fastened behind her head with two large pins, a red Indian handkerchief, whose square ends fell gracefully on her shoulders, a picturesque and graceful head-dress, which even Italy and Switzerland might envy us.

A "fichu" of white lawn, crossed on her bosom, was half concealed by her apron of brown linen; a coat of blue cloth, with tight sleeves, set off her fine figure, under which was seen her petticoat of thick gray fustian, striped with brown; very white stockings, and black buskins, hidden in little black "sabots" (wooden shoes), trimmed on the instep with a piece of lambskin, completed this costume of rustic simplicity, to which the natural charms of Fleur de Marie gave additional ornament. Holding in one hand her apron by the two corners, she took from thence handfuls of grain, which she distributed to the winged crowd by which she was surrounded. A pretty pigeon, of silvery whiteness, with beak and feet of purple, more audacious or more familiar than the rest, after having fluttered for some time around Fleur de Marie, settled at last on her shoulder. The young girl, accustomed, doubtless, to this cavalier treatment, did not discontinue throwing the grain with a liberal hand; but half turning her sweet face, with its enchanting profile, she slightly raised her head, and smilingly extended her rosy lips to the little coral beak of her friend.

The last rays of the setting sun shed a golden beam on this charming picture.

CHAPTER II.

UNEASINESS.

WHILE the Goualeuse was busy with her rural

occupations, Madame Georges and the Abbé Laporte, curé of Bouqueval, seated at the corner of the fire, in the little saloon of the farm, were talking of Fleur de Marie, a subject of conversation always interesting for them. The old curate, pensive, thoughtful, his head down, and his elbows on his knees, extended mechanically before the fire his two trembling hands. Madame Georges, occupied with her sewing, looked at the abbé from time to time, and appeared to be waiting for an answer. After a moment's silence he said, "You are right, Madame Georges, we must inform M. Rodolphe; if he questions Marie, she is so grateful to him that perhaps she will avow to her benefactor what she conceals from us." "Is it not true, Monsieur le Curé? then this night I will write to the address she gave me, Allée des Veuves."

"Poor child!" continued the abbé; "she ought to be so happy; what sorrow can be preying upon her now?" "Nothing seems to drive away this sadness, not even her application to her books." "She really has made extraordinary progress for the little time she has been studying."

"Is it not so, Monsieur l'Abbé? To learn to read and write almost at once, and to know enough of accounts to assist me in keeping the books of the farm! and, besides, the dear soul aids me so actively in everything that I am at once touched and astonished. She fatigues herself so much in spite of me, that I am uneasy about her health." "Happily, this black doctor has quite reassured us as to this slight cough which so much alarmed us." "He is so good, this M. David! he is so much interested for her! Mon Dieu! like every one else who knows her. Here each cherishes and respects her. This is not surprising, for, thanks to the generous and elevated views of M. Rodolphe, the people of this farm are the very best in the country. But the most boorish, the most indifferent, cannot be insensible to the attractions of this gentleness, at once angelic and timid, which always seems to be asking pardon. Unhappy child! as if she alone was culpable!" "Have you not told me," said the abbé, "that the sadness of Marie dated from the time of the visit that Madame Dubreuil, the fermière of M., the Duke of Lucenay at Arnoville, made here at the fêtes of All-Saints?" "Yes! Monsieur le Curé, I have remarked it, yet Madame Dubreuil, and, above all, her daughter Clara, a model of candour and goodness, have felt, like every one else, the charms of Marie; both of them overwhelmed her daily with marks of friendship; you know on Sunday our friends of Arnoville come here, or we go to see them. Well! one would say that each visit augments the melancholy of our dear child, although Clara already loves her like a sister."

"Truly, Madame Georges, it is a strange mystery. What can be the cause of this secret grief? She ought to be so happy! Between her present situation and the past, there is the difference of hell to paradise. Yet we cannot accuse her of ingratitude."

"Her! 'grand Dieu!'—she—so sweetly grateful for our attentions! she in whom we have always found instincts of such rare delicacy! This poor little thing, does she not do all she can that she may earn her living? does she not endeavour, by her services, to compensate for the hospitality she enjoys? This is not all; except Sundays, when I require her to dress with

some little care to accompany me to church, she has always wished to wear clothes as coarse and humble as those of the girls of the country. And, notwithstanding this, there exists in her such a distinction, such natural grace, that she is only still more charming in this dress: is it not so, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Ah! how I recognise there maternal pride!" said the old priest, smiling. At these words the eyes of Madame Georges filled with tears; she thought of her son. The abbé, guessing the cause of her emotion, said, "Courage! God has sent you this poor child to aid you in waiting for the time when you shall find your son. And, besides, a holy tie will attach you soon to Marie; a godmother, when she comprehends her holy duties, is almost a mother. As to M. Rodolphe, he has given her, so to speak, the life of the soul, in dragging her from the abyss. In advance he has fulfilled his duties of godfather."

"Do you find her sufficiently instructed to administer that sacrament which the unfortunate has doubtless not yet received?"

"In returning with her directly to the presbytery, I shall inform her that this ceremony will probably take place in a fortnight."

"Perhaps, Monsieur le Curé, you will preside some day at another ceremony, also very pleasing and serious." "What do you mean to say?"

"If Marie was beloved as she deserved, if she loved a good and honest man, why should she not be married?"

The abbé sadly bent his head, and answered:

"Marry her? Reflect, Madame Georges, truth will compel us to tell all to him who would wish to espouse Marie. And what man, notwithstanding my caution and yours, would brave the past, which has sullied the youthful days of this unfortunate child? Nobody would have her." "But M. Rodolphe is so generous! he will do for his protégée still more than he has done—a dowry." "Alas!" said the curé, interrupting Madame Georges, "evil to Marie, if cupidity alone will silence the scruples of him who would marry her! She would be wedded to the most painful fate; cruel recriminations would soon follow such a union." "You are right, Monsieur l'Abbé, it would be horrible. Ah! what an unfortunate lot is then reserved for her!" "She has great faults to expiate," said the curé, gravely. "Mon Dieu! Monsieur l'Abbé, abandoned so young, without resources, without aid, almost without the idea of good and evil, dragged, in spite of herself, in the ways of evil, how could she have escaped?" "Moral good sense ought to have sustained her, enlightened her; and, besides, did she endeavour to escape this horrid fate? Charitable people, are they then so scarce in Paris?" "No, doubtless; but how to find them? Before discovering one, how many refusals, how much indifference! and, besides, Maria did not need a passing charity, but a continued interest, which had put her in the way to earn her living." "Many mothers, without doubt, would have had pity on her; but it needed the good fortune to find them. Ah! believe me, I have known misery. But for a providential chance like that which, alas! too late, brought M. Rodolphe to Marie; but for, I say, one of these chances, the unfortunate, almost always brutally repulsed in first demands, believe pity not to be found, and pressed by hunger—hunger so imperious, they often seek

resources in vice, which they despair to obtain from commiseration."

At this moment the Goulouse entered the room.

"Where do you come from, my child?" asked Madame Georges, with an air of interest.

"From the 'fruitier,* madame, after having closed the doors of the lower court. The fruit is well preserved, except a few which I have taken out." "Why did you not tell Claudine to do it, Marie? You were too much fatigued."

"No, no, madame, I enjoy myself much in my fruitier, the odour of the ripe fruit is so delicious!"

"You must some day, Monsieur le Curé, visit the fruitier of Marie," said Madame Georges. "You cannot imagine with how much taste it is arranged; garlands of grapes separate each kind of fruit, and these are again divided into compartments by borders of moss."

"Oh! Monsieur le Curé, I am sure you will be very much pleased," said the Goulouse, ingenuously. "You will see what a fine effect the moss has around the red apples and golden pears. There are, above all, some lady apples which are so nice, which have such a charming white and rose colour, that they look like cherubims in a nest of green moss," added the young girl, with the exultation of the artist for her work.

The curé looked at Madame Georges smilingly, and said to Fleur de Maria, "I have already admired the dairy which you direct, my child; it would be the envy of the most fastidious dairy-woman; one of these days I will go and admire your fruitier, and these red apples, and these golden pears, and, above all, these beautiful little apples—cherubims in their mossy nest. But here is the sun almost down; you will only have time to conduct me to the parsonage and return before night. Take your cloak and let us go, my child. But I think the cold is too sharp; some one from the farm will accompany me."

"Ah! Monsieur le Curé, you will render her very unhappy," said Madame Georges. "She is so content to accompany you thus every evening!" "Monsieur le Curé," added the Goulouse, raising her large blue eyes towards the priest, "I shall think you are not pleased with me if you do not allow me to accompany you as usual." "I, poor child? take your cloak then, quick, quick, and wrap yourself up well." Fleur de Marie hastened to throw over her shoulders a sort of pelisse with a hood, made of course white woollen, bordered with a black velvet riband, and offered her arm to the curé. "Happily," said he, "it is not far, and the road is safe." "As it is a little later to-day than usual," replied Madame Georges, "do you wish that some one from the farm should go with you, Marie?" "They will think me a coward," said Marie, smiling. "Thank you, madame, do not trouble any one for me; the distance is short to the parsonage; only a quarter of an hour; I shall be back before night."

"I shall not insist, for never, Dieu merci! we never hear of any vagrants in this neighbourhood."

"Except on this account, I would not accept the arm of this dear child," said the curé, "although it is of great assistance."

The abbé soon left the farm, leaning on the arm of Fleur de Marie, who regulated her light step by the slow and painful movement of the old man.

* A place where fruit is kept.

A few minutes afterward, the priest and La Goualeuse arrived near the hollow pathway, where the *Maitre d'Ecole*, La Chouette, and Tortillard were concealed.

CHAPTER III.

THE AMEUSE.

THE church and parsonage of Bouqueval were situated on a hill-side, surrounded by chestnut-trees, and overlooking the village.

Fleur de Marie and the abbé reached a crooked path, which conducted to the curé's abode, in crossing the hollow-road, by which this hill was diagonally intersected.

La Chouette, the *Maitre d'Ecole*, and Tortillard, concealed in one of the windings of this road, saw the priest and his companion descend into the ravine, and come out by a steep path. The features of the young girl were concealed under the hood of her mantle: the Borgnesse did not recognise her former victim.

"Silence, my man!" said the old woman to the *Maitre d'Ecole*; "the young girl and the priest have just crossed the road; it must be her from the description given by the tall man in black: peasant's dress, middling size, petticoat striped with brown, mantle of wool, bound with black. She thus conducts, every day, the priest to his house, and returns alone. When she returns, directly, at the end of the road, we must pounce upon her and take her to the carriage." "And if she cries for help!" answered the *Maitre d'Ecole*, "they will hear her at the farm, since you say that you can see the buildings from hence; for you can see—you—," added he, in a mournful tone. "Certain, we can see the houses from here," said Tortillard. "Just now, I crept up to the top of the slope on my belly. I heard a man a speaking to his horses, in the court down there." "Then, now, see what must be done," answered the *Maitre d'Ecole*, after a moment's pause: "Tortillard must go and watch at the entrance of the road. When he sees the little one coming in the distance, he must go to her crying that he is the son of a poor old woman who is wounded by falling into the hollow-road, and he must beg the young girl to come to her assistance."

"I understand, 'Fourline.' The poor old woman shall be your Chouette. Well managed. My man, you are always the king of sensible men! And afterward, what shall I do?"

"You will go down to the end of the hollow-road, near where Barbillion waits with the carriage. I shall hide near-by. When Tortillard has brought the little one to the middle of the ravine, stop groaning, and jump on her, one hand round the neck, and the other in the mouth, after her tongue, understand? eh? keep her from crying."

"Understood, Fourline; just like the woman at the Canal St. Martin, whom we drowned after having robbed her of her black box, which she carried under her arm; same game, is it not?"

"Yes, just so. While you hold the little one tight, Tortillard will come after me; we three, we'll pack the young girl in my cloak; then we'll carry her to the carriage of Barbillion, and then to the plain of St. Dennis, where the man in black waits for us." "Ah! that's it! Stop, now. Fourline, your match is not to be found. If I

only had some powder I would set off some fire-works on your scone, and I would illuminate you with coloured lamps, 'a la Saint-Charlot,' the patron of *bequillard* (executioner). Do you understand this, you 'moutard?' If you wish to become a *passé-singe* (an adroit criminal), imitate my old dotard; there's a man for you!" said La Chouette, proudly, to Tortillard. Then, addressing the *Maitre d'Ecole*, she said, "Apropos, you don't know Barbillion is afraid of the devil of having a *brain fever* (Argot for a capital accusation)." "How's that?" "He has *bûti* (killed), some time since, in a dispute, the husband of a milk-woman, who came every morning from the country, in a little wagon drawn by an ass, to sell milk in the cité, at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, near to the *Ogresse* of the *Lapin Blanc*." The son of Bras-Rouge not understanding Argot, listened to La Chouette with a kind of disappointed curiosity. "You'd like to know what we are talking about, hey! Moutard?" "Marry, that's certain."

"If you are a good boy, I'll teach you Argot. You are old enough; it may be of use to you. Will you be pleased, 'Fife?'"

"Oh! I guess so! and, besides, I'd rather stay with you than with the old cheat of a quack, to pound his drugs and curry his horse. If I knew where he kept his *raisbane* for men, I'd put some in his soup, so I would no longer be forced to stay with him."

La Chouette burst out a laughing, and said to Tortillard, drawing him towards her, "Come right away, and kiss mamma, 'loulou,' ain't you a droll one! But how do you know that he has ratsbane for men—your master?" "Hold! I heard him say it one day, when I was concealed in the black cabinet in his room, where he keeps his bottles, his steel instruments, and where he mixes in his little mortars." "You heard him say what?" asked La Chouette. "I heard him say to a gentleman, in giving him a powder in a paper, 'Whoever takes this three times, will go to sleep under ground without any one knowing why nor how, and without leaving any trace.'"

"And who was this gentleman?" asked Le *Maitre d'Ecole*.

"A fine young man, who had black mustaches, and a handsome face like a lady. He came another time; but that time, when he went away, I followed him by order of M. Bradamante, to know where he roosted. This fine gentleman went into a fine house in the 'Rue de Chailiot.' My master told me: 'No matter where this gentleman goes, follow him and wait at the door; if he comes out again, follow until he stops again; if he remains, that proves he lives there: then, Tortillard, my boy, twist yourself up to know his name, or I'll twist your ears in a droll manner.' 'Well?' 'Well! I twisted myself, and I found out his name.' 'And did you manage?' asked the *Maitre d'Ecole*.

"Stop. I am no fool. I entered into the porter's lodge of the house of the 'Rue Chailiot': there was the porter, all powdered, in a fine brown suit, with a yellow collar and silver binding. I said to him, just so: 'My good sir, I come to get five francs that your master has promised me for finding his dog, a little black dog called Trumpet; and to prove what I say is true, this gentleman is of a dark complexion, with black mustaches, a white overcoat, and blue pantaloons; he told me that he lived in the 'Rue de Chailiot,' and that his name was Dupont.' 'The gentleman of whom you speak is my master, and is called

M. le Vicomte de Saint-Rémy; there is no other dog here than yourself, you bad boy; so march, or I'll thrash you, to teach you how to try to cheat me out of five francs," answered the porter, adding a kick by way of warning. However, it's all the same," continued Tortillard, philosophically. "I found out the name of the handsome gentleman with black mustaches, who came to my master's to get ratsbane for men; he is named the Vicomte de Saint-Rémy-my-my," added the son of Bras-Rouge, stuttering in his usual manner.

"Do you want me to eat you, little joker?" said La Chouette, embracing Tortillard; "isn't he cunning! I declare, you deserve that I should be your mother, wicked one!" These words made a singular impression on the little lame boy; his wicked countenance, crafty and cunning, became suddenly sad; he appeared to take in earnest the maternal demonstrations of La Chouette, and answered, "And I love you, too, because you embraced me the first day that you came to seek me at the Cœur Saignant, at my father's. Since the death of my mother, no one but you has caressed me; everybody else beats me or drives me off like a mangy dog; everybody, down to La Mère Pipelet, the portière." "Old hussey! I'd advise her to play the disgusted," said La Chouette, in a manner that deceived Tortillard, "to repulse a child's love like yours!" and the Borgnesse embraced again the little Tortillard, in a most ridiculously affecting manner. The son of Bras-Rouge, profoundly touched with this new proof of affection, returned the embrace, and cried in his gratitude, "You have only to command; you'll see how well I'll obey you—how I'll serve you!"

"Truly? Well! you will not repent it." "Oh! I should like to live with you!" "If you are a good boy, we'll see about it; you shall never leave us, my man."

"Yes," said the Maître d'Ecole, "you shall lead me like a poor blind man; you'll say you are my son, we will get into houses; and 'mille massacres!' " added the murderer with rage, "La Chouette aiding, we'll do some good business; I will show this demon of a Rodolphe, who made me blind, that I am not yet at the end of my crimes! He has taken away my sight, but he has not taken the thought of evil; I will be the head; Tortillard the eyes, and you the hand, La Chouette; you'll help me, hein?" "Am I not yours even to the rope and the gallows, Fourline? Did I not, on coming out of the hospital, when I heard that you had sent to the Ogresses' after me by that *sinné* (simple fellow) of Saint Mandé, did I not fly to your village, among those nineties of peasants, saying I was your wife?"

These words of the Borgnesse awoke some disagreeable "souvenir," for the Maître d'Ecole changing roughly his tone and language, cried in an angry voice, "Yes, I was tired, all alone with these honest people; at the end of a month, I could not remain quiet. I was afraid. Then I thought I would send for you. Well, I was caught," added he, in a still more irritated manner, "the day after your arrival. I was robbed of the rest of the money that this demon of the Allée des Veuves had given me. Yes, some one stole my belt filled with gold while I was asleep. You alone could have done it; and now I am at your mercy. Hold, every time I think of this, I don't know why I don't kill you on the spot, old she-thief!" and he made a step towards the Borgnesse.

"Take care of yourself; if you head a covered cotte!" cried Tortillard. "I'll crush yolk the path and she, wicked serpents as you are! east and La brigand in a fury; and hearing the son—persons, Rouge talking near him, he dealt a chance in the vigorously that it must have killed him if reached him: Tortillard, as much to revenge himself as La Chouette, picked up a stone, and throwing it at the Maître d'Ecole, hit him on the forehead. The blow was not dangerous, though severe. The brigand roused himself furiously like a mad bull, made some steps forward, and stumbled.

"Break-neck!" cried La Chouette, with shouts of laughter. Notwithstanding the bloody ties which bound her to this monster, she saw, for many reasons, and with a kind of ferocious joy the annihilation of this man, formerly so renowned and so proud of his gigantic strength. The Borgnesse justified thus in her own way this frightful thought of La Rochefoucault: "That we always find something satisfying in the troubles of our best friends." The horrible child, with yellow hair and weasel face, joined in the hilarity of La Chouette. At a new false step of the Maître d'Ecole, he cried, "Open your eyes, old boy, open your eyes, then! you are going the wrong way, don't you see clear? wipe the glasses of your spectacles."

From the impossibility of reaching the child, the Herculean murderer stopped, struck the ground with rage, placed his two enormous hands on his eyes, and put forth a cry like a muzzled tiger.

"You cough, old boy!" said the son of Bras-Rouge. "Hold, here is some famous liquorice; a gens d'arme gave it to me—musn't be disgusted with it!" and he gathered up a handful of fine sand, which he threw in the face of the assassin. Stung severely by this rain of gravel, the Maître d'Ecole suffered more cruelly from this new insult than from the blow of the stone; becoming pale under his lived scars, he stretched out his arms, crossed, and with a movement of inexpressible despair, and lifting towards heaven his frightful face, cried with a voice profoundly supplicating, "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

Coming from a man stained with every crime, and before whom, formerly, the most hardened wretches had trembled, this involuntary appeal to the Divine commiseration, seemed something providential. "Ah! ah! ah! Fourline, who makes such good use of his arms," cried La Chouette, chuckling. "Your tongue is twisted, my man; it is the devil that you ought to call to your assistance." "But a knife, at least, that I may kill myself! a knife!! since every one abandons me," cried the wretch, biting his fists with savage fury. "A knife? You have one in your pocket, Fourline, with a sharp edge. The little old man, of the 'Rue de Roule,' and the cattle merchant must have told it before this to the worms." The Maître d'Ecole, thus put in the way of executing his threats, changed the conversation, and continued, in a low and cowardly tone, "The Chourineur was good, he—he never robbed me; he had pity on me." "Why did you say that I stole your gold?" said La Chouette, hardly restraining her laughter.

"You alone entered into my room," answered the brigand; "I was robbed the first night of your arrival. Who would you that I should suspect? These peasants were incapable of doing it."

"Why can't they steal as well as any one

* * * ause they drink milk and get herbs
 A few nibbits?" "No matter; I have been Goualeuse. Is it the fault of La Chouette? Ah, where the, think about it. If I had stolen your Tortillard I have remained with you afterward? u a fool? Most certainly, I would have taken your money if I could, but, on the faith of Chouette, you would have seen me after I had spent the money, because you please me just as much as ever with your white eyes. Brigand! come, be good now; don't break your teeth by grinding them so hard." "One would think he was cracking nuts," said Tortillard. "Ah, ah, ah! he is right, the droll. Come, be calm, my man, and let him laugh; he is a child! But acknowledge that you are unjust. When the tall man in black, who looks like a death's head, said to me, 'Here is a thousand francs for you, if you will carry off a young girl, who is at the farm of Bouqueval, and bring her to a certain place on the plain of Saint Denis, that I will point out,' answer, Fourline, if I did not right away propose this to you, instead of choosing some one who could see? It is just the same as an alms to you; for, excepting that you can hold the little one while Tortillard and I pack her up, you are no more use than a fifth wheel to an omnibus. But, no matter; setting aside that I would have robbed you if I could, I like to do you a service. I wish that you should owe everything to your dear Chouette; it is my way. We'll give two hundred francs to Barbillon for driving the carriage, and for coming here twice to reconnoitre; and there'll remain eight hundred francs for us two to frolic. What do you say to that? Well, are you still angry with your old woman?"

"Who can assure me that you will give me anything when the job is once done?" said the brigand, with an air of defiance.

"I can give you nothing at all, it is true; for you are in my frying-pan, my man, like the Goualeuse, formerly. You must let yourself be cooked according to my notion, while the devil is waiting his turn to bake you, eh, eh, eh! Well, Fourline, do you still put at your Chouette?" added the Borgnesse, striking the shoulder of the brigand, who remained silent and overwhelmed.

"You are right," said he, with a sigh of concentrated rage; "it is my fate—mine—mine—at the mercy of a child and a woman, who formerly I could have killed with a breath. Oh! if I were not so much afraid of death!" said he, throwing himself on the ground. "Are you a coward now—are you a coward?" said La Chouette, with contempt. "Do talk now of your conscience; it will be still more of a farce. Look here, if you have no more courage than this, I'll be off—I'll leave you."

"And I can never revenge myself on this man, who, in torturing me thus, has placed me in this frightful position, and from whence I can never escape!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage. "Oh! I am afraid to die. Yes, afraid; but let any one tell me, They are going to place in your arms this man, and then afterward they will throw you into an abyss, both of you, I would say, Let them do it. Yes, for I would be very certain to hold him tight until we came to the bottom; and while we were rolling down, I'd bite him in the face, in the throat, in the heart; I'd tear him with my teeth! in fine, I'd be jealous of a knife!" "That's right, Fourline; that's the way I love you. Be calm; we'll find him, this devil of a Rodolphe; and the Chourineur,

also. When I came out of the hospital; I hovered around the house in the Allée des Veuves—all was closed; but I said to the tall man in mourning, 'Formerly, you wanted to pay us to do something to this monster of a Rodolphe; after this affair is over with the young girl, you have only to tell us what we must do.' 'Perhaps,' he answered. Do you hear, Fourline? perhaps! Courage, my man! we'll have a bite at him, I tell you so. We'll eat him!"

"Truly, you will not abandon me?" said the brigand. "If you forsake me what will become of me?" "That's true. Say, now, Fourline, what a joke it would be if we—Tortillard and I—should go off in the carriage, and leave you here in the midst of fields this night, when the cold pinches so hard. That would be funny, hein, brigand?"

At this threat the Maître d'Ecole shuddered. He drew near to La Chouette, and said to her, tremblingly, "No, no; you would not do that, La Chouette; nor you, Tortillard; it would be too wicked." "Ah, ah, ah! too wicked. Is he a fool! And the little old man of the Rue du Roule—and the cattle merchant—and the woman of the canal Saint Martin—and the gentleman in the Allée des Veuves! Do you think that they found you very loving, with your long knife? Why shouldn't you have jokes played to you in your turn?" "Well, I avow it!" said the Maître d'Ecole, gloomily. "Come, I was wrong to suspect you—I was wrong to wish to strike Tortillard. I ask pardon. Do you hear? and you also, Tortillard? Yes, I ask both your pardons."

"I want you to ask pardon on your knees, because you wished to strike La Chouette," said Tortillard. "Little love! ain't he amusing?" said La Chouette, laughing. "He really gives me a desire to see what sort of a figure you'll cut in that way, my man. Come, on your knees, just as if you were making love to your Chouette—quick, or we leave you; and I give you notice, in a half hour it will be night." "Night or day, what does it signify to him?" said Tortillard, chuckling. "This gentleman always keeps his shutters closed: he is afraid of spoiling his complexion." "Behold me on my knees. I ask your pardon, La Chouette; and yours also, Tortillard. Well, are you satisfied?" said the brigand, kneeling in the middle of the road. Now you will not abandon me—speak?"

This strange group, standing on the slope of the ravine, lighted by the red gleams of twilight, was hideous to behold. In the middle of the road, the Maître d'Ecole, in a supplicating manner, extended to the Borgnesse his powerful hands; his rough and tangled hair fell, like a mane, on his livid face; his red eyelids, half opened through fright, partly disclosed the immovable eyeballs, dull, glassy, dead—the look of a corpse. His formidable shoulders were humbly bent. This Hercules knelt, tremblingly, at the feet of an old woman and a child. The Borgnesse, wrapped in a shawl of red tartan, her head covered with a cap of black tulle, from whence escaped some tresses of gray hair, stood over the bandit in all her stature. The long, tanned, wrinkled, besotted face of this old woman, with her crooked nosé, expressed insulting and ferocious joy; her yellow eye sparkled like a live coal; her sinister smile parted her lips, shaded by long hairs, discovering three or four large teeth, yellow and decayed. Tortillard, dressed in his blouse, with the leather belt, standing on

one foot, leaned on the arm of La Chouette, to maintain his equilibrium. The sickly and cunning face of this child, with a complexion as faded as his hair, expressed, at this moment, a wickedness at once diabolical and jeering.

"But promise me, then, at least not to abandon me!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, frightened at the silence of La Chouette and Tortillard, who enjoyed his fear. "Are you no longer there?" said the murderer, leaning down to listen, and mechanically advancing his arms. "Yes, yes, my man, we are here; don't be afraid. Abandon you!—rather die! Once for all, you must be assured, and I will tell you why I will not abandon you—never. Listen: I have always wished to have some one to feel my nails, man or beast. Before Pegriotte (who the devil return to me, for I have always my notion to wash her with vitriol)—before Pegriotte, I had a 'môme,' who died under the punishment; that was the reason why I was sent to prison for six years. During that time I was the torment of the birds: I caught them to strip the feathers from them; but I had no fun for my pains; they can't stand anything. When I came out of prison, the Goualeuse fell under my clutches; but the little hussey escaped, while there was some of her skin left to amuse one's self with. After that I had a dog, who suffered as much as she did: I finished by cutting off one of his legs before and one behind; that made him look so awkward that I laughed—I laughed, ready to split my sides!"

"I must do just so to a dog that I know, and who bit me," said Tortillard to himself. "When I met you, my man," continued La Chouette, "I was just about finishing a cat. Well, now you shall be my cat, my bird, my Pegriotte—you shall be my beast of suffering. Do you comprehend, my man? Instead of a bird or a child, to torment a wolf or a tiger, that's what I call rather select, hein?" "Old she-devil!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with renewed rage. "Come, now, you are angry again with your old woman. Well, leave her; you are the master. I don't take you without your consent." "Yes, the door is open; march, No-eyes, and straight ahead!" said Tortillard, screaming with laughter. "Oh, let me die! die!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, throwing about his arms. "You repent, my man; you have already said this. You die! You joke: you are as solid as the Pont-Neuf. Stop, now; you must live for the happiness of your Chouette. I will put you in misery from time to time, because it is my pleasure; and you must earn the bread I give you; but, if you behave yourself, you shall assist me in all my good jobs, like to-day, and in others that are better, where you can serve me. You shall be my dog: when I say to you, Bring, you shall bring; bite, you shall bite. And now, say, my man. I don't want to take you by force, at least. If, instead of the life I propose to you, you prefer to have an income, ride in a carriage with a pretty little wife, to be decorated with the cross of honour, to be made a great judge, and to see clear, instead of being blind, don't be backward; it is very easy: you have only to say it; it shall be served up smoking hot. Shan't it, Tortillard?" "Smoking hot, all boiling, right off!" answered the son of Bras-Rouge, chuckling. But, leaning suddenly towards the ground, he said, in a low voice, "I hear somebody walking; conceal ourselves. It is not the young girl, for they came from the same side she came from." In a few minutes, a strong country girl, followed by a

large dog, and carrying on her head a covered basket, crossed the ravine, and took the path which had been followed by the priest and La Goualeuse. We will rejoin these two persons, and leave the three accomplices concealed in the hollow road.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARSONAGE.

THE last rays of the setting sun disappeared slowly behind the imposing mass of buildings of the Chateau d'Ecouen and the woods that surrounded it; on every side, as far as the eye could reach, were spread out immense fields, whose brown furrows were hardened by the frost; a vast solitude of which the hamlet of Boqueval seemed the oasis. The perfectly serene and cloudless sky was mottled in the west with long streaks of purple, a certain sign of wind and cold; these colours, at first very bright, became of a violet hue as the twilight advanced and night came on.

A young moon, like the half of a ring of silver, began to shine softly in the midst of the azure and shade. The silence was profound, the hour solemn. The curé stopped for a moment on the hill to enjoy the appearance of this fine evening.

After a few moments' reflection, extending his trembling hand towards the horizon, half obscured by the shades of evening, he said to Fleur de Marie, who walked pensively at his side, "See now, my child, this immensity, whose boundaries cannot be seen—not the least noise is heard—it seems to me that silence and infinity give us almost an idea of eternity. I say this to you, Marie, because you are sensible of the beauties of creation. Often have I been touched with the religious admiration with which they inspire you, who have been for so long a time debarred from them; are you not struck as well as me with the imposing calmness of this hour?" La Goualeuse answered not a word.

Astonished, the curé looked at her; she wept. "What is the matter, then, my child?" "My father, I am very unhappy!" "Unhappy! You, now unhappy?" "I know I have no right to complain of my lot, after all that has been done for me. Yet—" "Yet?" "Ah! my father, pardon these sorrows; they offend, perhaps, my benefactors." "Listen, Marie, we have often asked the reason of the grief which often overhangs you, and which causes your second mother the most lively inquietude. You avoid answering us; we have respected your secret, and have been afflicted that we could not solace your sorrows." "Alas, my father, I cannot tell you all that passes within me. Thus, like you just now, I felt myself troubled at the sight of this calm and peaceful evening. My heart is broken, and I weep."

"But what is the matter, Marie? You know how much we love you. Come, tell me all. Besides, I can tell you that the day draws near when Madame Georges and M. Rodolphe will present you to the font for baptism, in taking before God the engagement to protect you always." "M. Rodolphe? he who saved me!" cried Fleur de Marie, joining her hands; "he will deign to give me this new proof of affection! oh! hold! I will conceal nothing from

"you, my father; I fear too much to be ungrateful." "Ungrateful! and how?" "To make myself understood, I must speak of the first days I came to the farm."

"I listen to you; we will talk as we walk on." "You will be indulgent, won't you, my father? What I am going to tell you is perhaps very wicked." "The Lord has proved to you that he is very merciful. Take courage." "When I learned, on arriving here, that I should not leave the farm and Madame Georges," said Fleur de Marie, after a moment's pause, "I thought I was in a dream. At first I felt as if I were stunned with happiness; at each moment I thought of M. Rodolphe. Often, all alone and in spite of myself, I raised my eyes to heaven, as if to seek him there, and thank him. At length—I accuse myself, my father—I thought more of him than of God; for he had done for me what God alone could do; I was happy; happy as one who had escaped forever a great danger. You and Madame Georges were so kind to me that I thought myself then more to be pitied than blamed."

The curé looked at the Goualeuse with surprise; she continued. "By degrees I became accustomed to a life so easy; I no longer felt afraid on awaking to find myself at the Ogresse's; I felt myself, as it may be said, to sleep with security; all my joy was to aid Madame Georges in her labours, to apply myself to the lessons you gave me, my father; and also to profit by your exhortations. Save some moments of shame when I thought of the past, I believed myself the equal of everybody, because every one was good to me, when one day—" Here her sobs interrupted her. "Come, now, be calm, poor child; courage! go on."

The Goualeuse wiped her eyes and thus continued:

"You may remember, my father, that during the fête of All Saints, Madame Dubreuil, 'fermière' of the Duke of Lucenay, at Amoville, came with her daughter to pass some time here with us." "Doubtless, and I saw with pleasure that you became acquainted with Clara Dubreuil; she is an excellent young person." "She is an angel, my father; an angel. When I knew that she was coming to pass some days at the farm, my happiness was great; I only thought of the moment when she would arrive. At length she came. I was in my room; I was to divide it with her. I arranged it all in order; they sent to seek me. I entered in the saloon, my heart beat; Madame Georges, in introducing me to this beautiful young girl, said, 'Marie, here is a friend for you.' 'And I hope that you and my daughter will soon be like two sisters,' added Madame Dubreuil. Hardly had her mother said these words, than Mlle. Clara ran to embrace me. Then, my father," said Fleur de Marie, weeping, "I do not know what suddenly passed within me; but when I felt the pure and lovely face of Clara touch my faded cheek, my cheek became burning with shame, with remorse. I remembered what I had been. I! to receive the caresses of a young person so modest! Oh! that seemed to me a mockery, an unworthy hypocrisy." "But, my child—"

"Ah! my father," cried Fleur de Marie, interrupting the curé, in a mournful manner, "when M. Rodolphe brought me from the cité, I had then vaguely the consciousness of my degradation. But do you think that the education, the counsels, the examples that I have received

from Madame Georges and yourself, in cultivating my mind, have not, alas! made me comprehend that I have been more culpable than unfortunate? Before the arrival of Mlle. Clara, when these thoughts tormented me, I stifled them in endeavouring to please Madame Georges and you, my father. If I blushed for the past, it was to myself. But the sight of this young person of my own age, so charming, so virtuous, made me reflect on the distance that separated us forever. For the first time I felt that there are crimes nothing can efface. Since that day, this thought never leaves me. In spite of myself, I dwell on it without ceasing; since that day I have no longer any repose."

The Goualeuse wiped her eyes, filled with tears.

After having looked at her some time, with the most tender commiseration, the curé answered, "Reflect, my child, that if Madame Georges wished to see you the friend of Madame Dubreuil, it is because she knew you worthy of it from your good conduct. The reproaches you make yourself are almost addressed to your second mother." "I know it, my father, I was wrong without doubt; but I could not overcome my shame and fear. This is not all; I want courage to finish." "Go on, Marie; so far your scruples, or, rather, your remorse, prove in favour of your heart." "Clara once established on the farm, I was as sad as I at first thought I should be happy, in thinking I should have a companion of my own age; she, on the contrary, was all joyous. Her bed was prepared in my room. The first night, before we retired, she embraced me, and said she loved me already; she asked me to call her Clara, as she would call me Marie. Then she prayed, saying she would join my name in her prayers if I would do so for her. I dared not refuse that. After talking for some time, she fell asleep; I had not yet retired; I approached her; I regarded her angel face in weeping; and then, in thinking that she slept in the same room with me, who had been found at the Ogresse's with robbers and assassins, I trembled as if I had done a bad action. I went to my bed; I had fearful dreams; I saw again the sinister figures that I had almost forgotten, the Chourineur, the Maître d'Ecole, La Chouette. Oh! what a night! Mon Dieu! what a night! what dreams!" said the Goualeuse, shuddering at the thought. "Poor Marie!" said the curé, with emotion; "why have you not confided this to me before? I would have consoled you. But continue." "I slept very late; Clara came to awaken me with a kiss. To conquer what she called my coldness and prove her friendship, she wished to confide to me a secret; as soon as she was eighteen she was to be united to the son of a farmer of Goussainville, whom she loved tenderly. Then she related to me, in a few words, her past life; a life simple, calm, happy; she had never left her mother, she never would leave her; for her betrothed would assist her father on his farm. 'Now, Marie,' said she, 'you know me as if I were your sister; relate your life.' At these words I thought I should have died with shame. I blushed, I stammered. I was ignorant what Madame Georges might have said of me; I feared to contradict her. I answered vaguely that I was an orphan and brought up by strict people, I had not been very happy in my childhood, and that my happiness dated from the time of my residence with Ma-

Madame Georges. Then Clara, more through interest than curiosity, asked where I was brought up; was it in the city or country? what was my father's name? Above all, she asked me if I remembered my mother. Each of the questions embarrassed as much as they pained me; for it was necessary to answer them with a falsehood, and you have taught me, my father, how bad it is to tell an untruth. But Clara did not imagine that I could deceive her. I attributed the hesitation of my answers to the grief which the sad recollections of my childhood caused me. Clara believed me, and pitied me with a kindness which tortured me. Oh! my father! you can never know what I suffered in this first interview! how much it cost me not to say a word that was deceitful and false!" "Unfortunate child! may the wrath of God bear on those who, in casting you in the abominable way of perdition, will force you, perhaps, to suffer all your life the inexorable consequences of a first fault!" "Oh! yes, they have been very wicked, my father," answered Fleur de Marie, bitterly; "for my shame is indelible. This is not all; while Clara was telling me of the happiness she expected from her marriage, from her family circle, I could not but compare my lot with hers; for, notwithstanding the benefits I receive, my lot must be a sad one; you and Madame Georges, in making me to understand virtue, have also made me understand the horrors of my past life. Alas! since the knowledge of good and evil is so fatal to me, why not leave me to my unhappy fate!"

"Oh! Marie! Marie!" "What I say is very wicked, is it not, my father? Alas! that is what I dared not to confess to you. Yes, sometimes I have been ungrateful enough to say, If I had not been taken away from the paths of infamy, well! misery would soon have killed me; at least, I should have died in ignorance of what I shall now never cease to regret." "Alas! Marie, that is fatal! A nature, even generously endowed by the Creator, had it been plunged but one single day in the mire from whence you were taken, would always preserve an indelible stigma. Such is the immutability of Divine Justice." "You see, now, my father," cried Fleur de Marie, mournfully, "I must despair even till death!"

"You must despair to efface from your life this desolating page," said the priest, in a grave and sorrowful voice; "but you must hope in the infinite compassion of the All Powerful: here below, for you, poor child, tears, remorse, expiation; but one day, there, above," added he, raising his hand towards the starry firmament, "there, pardon, eternal felicity!"

"Pity, pity, mon Dieu! I am so young, and my life may perhaps be so long!" said the Goualeuse in a touching voice, falling, with an involuntary movement, at the feet of the curé. The priest was standing on the summit of the hill, not far from the parsonage. His black cassock, his venerable face, around which floated his long white hair, was lighted by the last gleams of twilight; one hand was raised towards heaven, the other abandoned to Fleur de Marie, who covered it with kisses.

The hood of her gray mantle, at this moment thrown back upon her shoulders, discovered the enchanting profile of the young girl—her supplicating and tearful expression—her neck, of dazzling whiteness, where was seen the silken fastenings of her flaxen hair,

This simple and grand picture, presented a striking contrast, a singular coincidence, to the sorrowful scene which at the same moment occurred between La Chouette and the Maîtresse d'Ecole, in the ravine of the hollow road. Concealed in the darkness of the gloomy "chemin creux," assailed by cowardly fears, a frightful murderer, bearing the penalty of his misdeeds, was also kneeling; but before his accomplice, a jeering fury, a revengeful woman, who tormented him without pity, and excited him to new crimes—his accomplice—first cause of the misfortunes of Fleur de Marie—of Fleur de Marie, who was tortured by never-ceasing remorse. The exaggeration of her grief—it is not to be conceived? Surrounded from her infancy with wicked, degraded, infamous beings; leaving her prison for the den of the Ogresse, another humble prison—never leaving the court of her jail, or the dark streets of the city—this unfortunate young girl, had she not lived until then in profound ignorance of what was good and virtuous, as she was also a stranger to noble and religious sentiments, and the splendid magnificence of nature?

"Oh! sorrow for me!" said La Goualeuse, in desperation; "my whole life, was it as pure as yours, my father, would henceforth be disgraced by conscience and the memory of the past. Sorrow for me!" "Happiness for you, on the contrary, Marie; happiness for you, to whom the Lord sends this remorse, full of bitterness, but salutary! It proves the religious susceptibility of your soul. So many others, less nobly endowed than you are, had in your place soon forgotten the past, to enjoy only the present felicity. A delicate mind like yours finds sufferings where a vulgar one would feel none! But each one of these sufferings will be recompensed up there, believe me! God did not leave you a moment in the evil path, but to reserve for you the glory of repentance, and the eternal recompense due to the expiation! Has he not said it himself? 'Those who do right without fighting for it, and who come to me with the smile on their lip, those are my elect; but those who are wounded in the struggle, and come to me bleeding and wounded, those are the elect from among my elect.' Courage, then, my child! Advice, support, nothing shall be wanting. I am very old; but Madame Georges, but M. Rodolphe, have yet many years to live. M. Rodolphe above all—who shows so much interest for you—who follows your progress with a solicitude so enlightened; say, Marie, say, can you ever regret having met him?" The Goualeuse was about to answer, when she was interrupted by the peasant girl of whom we have spoken; she was one of the servants of the farm.

"Excuse me, Monsieur le Curé," said she to the priest, "but Madame Georges told me to bring this basket of fruit to the parsonage, and so I can accompany Mlle. Marie back, for it is late; but I have brought Turk with me," said she, caressing an enormous dog from the Pyrenees, who could have defied a bear in combat. "Although there are no robbers in these parts, it is always more prudent."

"You are right, Claudine. Here we are at the passage. You will thank Madame Georges for me." Then addressing in a low tone the Goualeuse, the curé said to her gravely, "I must go to-morrow to the conference of the diocese; but I shall return by five o'clock. If you wish, my child, I will expect you at the parsonage. I

see, from the state of your mind, that you have need of a longer conference with me." "I thank you, my father," answered Fleur de Marie; "to-morrow I will come, since you allow it."

"But here we are at the garden-gate," said the priest. "Leave the basket there, Claudine; my housekeeper will take it. Return quick to the farm with Marie, for it is almost night, and the cold increases. To-morrow, Marie, at five o'clock!" "To-morrow, my father." The abbé entered his garden, and the Goualeuse and Claudine, followed by Turk, took the road to the farm.

CHAPTER V.

THE RENCONTRE.

NIGHT came on clear and cold. Following the advice of the Maître d'Ecole, La Chouette had gone with the brigand to a part of the road at some distance from the pathway, and nearer the place where Barbillion was waiting with the hack. Tortillard, posted as a scout, watched the return of Fleur de Marie, whom he was to entice into this ambush, by supplicating her to come to the assistance of a poor old woman. The son of Bras-Rouge had advanced a few steps from the ravine to listen; he heard, at a distance, the Goualeuse talking to the peasant who accompanied her. The young girl being no longer alone, the plot had failed; he hastened to descend into the ravine, and ran to inform La Chouette. "There is some one with her," said he, in a low and breathless voice. "May the hangman strangle her!" cried she, in a rage. "Who is she with?" asked the Maître d'Ecole. "Doubtless with the peasant girl who just now passed, followed by a large dog; I heard a woman's voice," said Tortillard. "Hold! Listen! Do you not hear the noise of their sabots?" "There are two of them; I can take charge of the little one in the gray mantle; but the other one! what shall we do with her? Fourline can't see, and Tortillard is too weak to manage the other one, whom the devil choke! What shall we do?" repeated La Chouette.

"I am not strong; but, if you say so, I'll catch hold of the legs of the peasant girl with the dog. I'll hold one with my hands and teeth; I'll not let her go. During this time, you can carry off the little one; you, La Chouette." "And if they scream? and if they kick? they will hear them at the farm," answered La Borgnesse. "They will have time to come to their assistance before we can reach the carriage. It isn't so easy to carry off a woman who struggles!" "And they have a large dog with them," said Tortillard. "Bah! bah! if it was only that, with one blow of my shoe I'd settle him," said La Chouette.

"They come," continued Tortillard, listening to the noise of their approaching footsteps; "they are descending into the ravine."

"But do speak now, Fourline; what do you advise, old tadpole? Are you dumb?" "There is nothing to be done to-day," said the brigand. "And the thousand francs of the gentleman in black?" cried La Chouette; "they are lost, then? Rather—use your knife! your knife! Fourline. I'll kill the companion, so she shan't trouble us; as to the little one, Tortillard and I'll soon gag her."

"But the man in black doesn't expect us to kill any one."

"Well, we'll put the blood down as something extra in the bill. He must pay well, since he is our accomplice."

"There they are! They descend," said Tortillard in a low voice.

"Your knife, my man!" cried La Chouette, also in a low tone.

"Oh! La Chouette!" said Tortillard in affright, stretching his hands towards La Borgnesse; "it is too much! Kill her? Oh! no, no!"

"Your knife, I tell you," repeated La Chouette in a low voice, without paying any attention to the supplications of Tortillard, and taking off her shoes in great haste. "I take off my shoes," added she, "to surprise them by creeping after them. It is quite dark, but I can recognise the little one by her gray mantle, and I'll kill the other one." "No!" said the brigand, "to-day it is useless; there will be time enough to-morrow." "You are afraid? *frileux*?" said La Chouette, with brutal contempt. "I am not afraid," answered the Maître d'Ecole; "but you may fail, and thus lose all."

The dog which accompanied the peasant, scenting, no doubt, the people in ambush, stopped short, barked with fury, and paid no attention to the reiterated calls of the companion of Fleur de Marie.

"Do you hear their dog? Here they are! Quick—your knife! or—useless!" cried La Chouette, with a menacing tone. "Come, then, and take it by force!" said the Maître d'Ecole. "It is finished! it is too late!" cried La Chouette, after having listened a moment with attention. "They are gone. You shall pay for this! Get out, gallows-bird!" added she, furiously shaking her fist in his face; "a thousand francs lost by your fault!" "A thousand, two thousand, perhaps three gained, on the contrary!" answered the Maître d'Ecole, in a tone of authority. "Listen to me, La Chouette," added he, "and you will see if I was wrong in refusing to lend you my knife. You go to Barbillion—and both of you return with the carriage to the place where you are to meet the tall man in black. You will tell him that nothing can be done to-day, but that to-morrow she shall be carried off." "And you?" murmured La Chouette, still in a rage.

"Listen once more! The little girl goes alone every night to see the priest home; it was by chance, to-day, that she met some one; it is probable that to-morrow we'll have better luck. Return, then, to-morrow at this hour, with Barbillion and the hack." "But you? but you?"

"Tortillard will lead me to the farm where this girl resides; he will say we are lost; that I am his father, a poor workman, blind from an accident; that we are going to Louvres, to one of our relations, who will assist us; and that we became lost in the fields, by trying to find a shorter path. We will ask to pass the night at the farm, in a corner of the stable. They never refuse this. These peasants will believe us, and give us a lodging. Tortillard will examine well the doors and windows: there is always money among these folks at the approach of rent-day. I, who have owned property," added he, with bitterness, "I know this. We are now in the second week of January; it is the right time. The farm is situated, you say, in a lonely place; when we once know how to get in and out, we can return with some friends; it is an affair that can be managed."

"Always a trump; and what wisdom!" said

La Chouette, beginning to be appeased. "Go on, Fourline."

"To-morrow morning, instead of leaving the farm, I will complain that I am not able to walk. If they don't believe me, I will show the wound that I have had since I broke my chain, and which always troubles me. I will say that I got this wound from a bar of red-hot iron, while working at my trade as a machinist; they will believe me. Thus, I will remain at the farm a part of the day, so that Tortillard can have time to examine everything. When the evening comes, at the moment that the young girl, as is her custom, goes home with the priest, I will say that I am better, and that I am ready to go. We will follow the young girl at a distance, and we will return to await her here, when she goes home. Knowing us, she will have no fear; we will take hold of her, Tortillard and I; and, once she is within my arms, I'll answer for her; she is caught, and the thousand francs are ours. This is not all. In two or three days we can give the affair at the farm to Barbillion, and some others, and will divide whatever they get, since it is us who *nourri le poupard* (pointed out the business)." "Come, No-yes, you haven't your equal," said La Chouette, embracing the Maître d'Ecole. "But if, by chance, she should not take the priest home to-morrow?"

"We will wait the day after; it is one of those morsels that must be eaten cold and slowly; besides, it will make expenses that will augment the bill against the gentleman in black; and besides, once at the farm, I will know better how to judge, from what I hear, if we have any chance to carry her off by the means proposed, or whether we must arrange another way."

"That will answer, my man! your plan is a famous one! I say, Fourline, when you become altogether infirm we must make you consulting robber; you'll gain as much money as a lawyer. Come, embrace your Chouette, and make haste; these peasants go to sleep with the chickens. I'll clear out and find Barbillion; to-morrow, at four o'clock, we'll be at the cross, him and his carriage, unless, in the mean time, he should be arrested for having killed the husband of the milkwoman of the 'Rue de la Vielle-Draperie.' A quarter of an hour after, I'll be here and wait for you."

"You've said it—till to-morrow, La Chouette. And I, who was going to forget to give some wax to Tortillard, if there should be any impressions to take at the farm! Here! make good use of it." "Fy, fy!" added the Borgnesse, giving a piece of wax to Tortillard.

"Yes, yes; papa showed me how. I have taken for him the impression of the lock of a little iron box that my master, the quack, has in the black cabinet."

"Very well; and, that it don't stick, don't forget to wet your wax after having well moulded it in your hands."

"I know how!" answered Tortillard. "But, you see, I do everything you wish me to; and that is—because you love me a little, don't you, La Chouette?" "I love you! I love you as much as if you were my child, and the deceased Emperor, the great Napoleon, was your father!" said La Chouette, embracing Tortillard, who was immoderately flattered with this imperial compliment.

"Till to-morrow, Fourline!" "Farewell!" answered the brigand, who, with Tortillard, directed his steps towards the farm, while La Chouette went to find Barbillion and the hack.

Strange fatality which thus drew together Aaseldo Duresnel and his wife, whom he had not seen since his condemnation to labour in the galleys!

CHAPTER VI.

THE EVENING.

Is there anything more cheering than the kitchen of a large farmhouse, at the hour of the evening repast—in the winter season, above all? Is there any that more vividly recalls the calmness and happiness of a rural life? A proof of this could have been adduced at the sight of the kitchen of the Bouqueval farm. Its immense chimney, six feet in height by eight in breadth, resembled a wall of stone opening on a furnace. On the black hearth blazed immense logs of oak and beech. This immense fire sent as much light as heat to all parts of the kitchen, and rendered useless the light of a lamp suspended from the main beam of the ceiling. Large kettles and saucepans of red copper were arranged on shelves, shining like silver; an antique fountain of the same metal sparkled like a mirror, not far from a kneading-trough of walnut, carefully polished, and from whence arose a most refreshing odour of new-made bread; a large table, covered with a coarse cloth, but of dazzling purity, occupied the middle of the room; the place of each one was marked by a plate of delft-ware, and spoon and fork of iron, glistening like silver. In the middle of the table a large tureen, filled with a vegetable soup, smoked like a crater, and covered with its savoury fumes a formidable plate of ham and cabbage, and another plate, not less formidable, of a ragout of mutton and potatoes; finally, a quarter of roast veal, flanked by two salads, and accompanied by two plates of potatoes and two cheeses, completed the repast. Three or four stone pitchers, filled with foaming cider made on the farm, and as many loaves of bread, as large as millstones, were at the discretion of the labourers.

An old shepherd's dog, almost without teeth, owed to his great age and former services the permission to remain by the fireside. Using modestly and discreetly this privilege, with his muzzle elongated on his two outstretched paws, he followed with an attentive eye the different culinary evolutions which preceded the supper. This venerable dog answered to the name, somewhat pastoral, of Lysander. Perhaps the ordinary of the people of this farm will appear somewhat sumptuous; but Madame Georges (in this faithful to the views of Rodolphe) ameliorated as much as possible the condition of her workmen, exclusively chosen among the most honest and industrious of the country. They were well paid; they were made comfortable and happy; thus, to become a labourer on the farm of Bouqueval was the aim of all the good workmen of the district; an innocent ambition, which kept alive a sort of emulation, so much the more to be praised as it turned to the profit of the masters they served; for no one could present himself to obtain a vacant place on a farm unless he had the best recommendations from his former employer.

Rodolphe created thus, on a small scale, a kind of model farm, not only destined to the improvement of agriculture or the breed of cattle, but, above all, to the amelioration of men; and

he attained this end by making it their interest to be honest, active, and intelligent. After having served up the supper, and placed on the table a jug of old wine, destined to accompany the dessert, the cook rang the bell. At this joyous appeal, labourers, boys, milkmaids, girls, to the number of twelve or fifteen, entered gayly into the kitchen. The head of the table was occupied by an old labourer with white hair, with an honest and hardy face, and a slightly sneering mouth. The *père châtelain* (as this Nestor was called), having never left the farm since his infancy, was there employed as head labourer when Rodolphe bought the farm; the old "serviteur" was warmly recommended to him; he kept him, and he was invested, under the orders of Madame Georges, as a superintendant of the field-labours. All the peasants seated themselves. After having asked a blessing in a loud voice, the *père châtelain*, after an old and holy custom, traced a cross on one of the loaves of bread with the point of his penknife, and cut off a small piece, representing the share of the Holy Virgin, or for the poor; he poured out a glass of wine afterward, under the same invocation, and put the whole on a plate, which was piously placed on the centre of the table. At this moment the dogs without began to bark; the old Lysander answered by a sullen growl, drew up his nap, and showed two or three stumps which were yet quite respectable.

"There is some one by the walls of the court," said *père châtelain*. Hardly had he said these words, when the bell of the large door was rung. "Who can come so late?" said the old labourer; "everybody has come in. Go and see, Jean René."

Jean René put back with regret into his plate an enormous spoonful of hot soup, which he had been blowing like a young Eolus, and went out of the kitchen.

"This is the first time for a long while that Madame Georges and Mademoiselle Marie have not taken their seat in the corner, to assist at our supper," said the *père châtelain*; "I am hungry, but I don't eat with the same appetite." "Madame Georges has gone up to the room of Mademoiselle Marie; for when she returned from her walk, she was quite unwell, and has gone to bed," answered Claudine, the robust peasant girl who had accompanied Fleur de Marie home. "Our good Mademoiselle Marie is only indisposed—I hope she is not sick?" asked the old labourer, anxiously. "No, no! Dieu merci! *père châtelain*; Madame Georges said it was nothing," answered Claudine; "otherwise she would have sent to Paris for M. David, this black doctor, who has already taken charge of her when she was sick. All the same, I know; but a black doctor is so surprising! For myself, I have no great confidence. A white doctor, very well; it's Christianlike."

"Hasn't M. David cured Mademoiselle Marie?" "Yes, *père châtelain*." "Well!" "All the same; a black doctor scares me." "Didn't he put old Mother Anique on her feet, who, in consequence of a wound in her legs, had not been able to move from her bed in three years?" "Yes, yes, *père châtelain*; but a black doctor: just think: all black, all black."

"Listen, my girl: what colour is your heifer Musette?"

"White, *père châtelain*, white as a swan; and a famous milker: can say that without making her blush."

"And your heifer, Rosette?" "Black as a crow, *père châtelain*: a famous milker also—must be just to all." "And the milk of this black heifer, what colour is it?" "Why, white, to be sure: it is very simple, white as snow." "As white and good as that of Musette's?" "Why, yes, *père châtelain*." "Although Rosette is black?" "Although Rosette is black—what difference does it make in the milk, whether the cow is black, red, or white?" "None." "Absolutely none, *père châtelain*." "Well, then! my girl, why cannot a black doctor be as good as a white one?" "Marry! *père châtelain*; it was on account of the skin," said the girl, after a moment's hesitation. "But, in truth, since Rosette the black has as good milk as Musette the white, the skin can make no difference." These physiognomic reflections of Claudine on the difference between the races of the blacks and whites were interrupted by the return of Jean René, who blew on his fingers with as much vigour as he had blown on his soup. "Oh! how cold! how cold it is to-night! it freezes as hard as a stone," said he, coming in; "better be within doors than without such weather: how cold!"

"A frost commencing with an east wind will be hard and long; you ought to know that, boy. But who rang the bell?" asked the old labourer. "A poor blind man, and a child who conducts him, *père châtelain*."

CHAPTER VII.

HOSPITALITY.

"AND what does he want, this blind man?" asked the *père châtelain* of Jean René. "The poor man and his son have got lost in going to Louvres by the cross-road. As it is so cold and the night so dark, for the sky is now overcast, the blind man and his boy ask permission to sleep in the stable. Madame Georges is so good that she never refuses hospitality to an unfortunate; she will certainly consent to give a lodging to these poor people; but we must ask her. Go and see, Claudine."

"And where is he waiting, this poor man?" asked le *père châtelain*.

"In the little granary." "Why did you put him in the granary?"

"If he had remained in the court, the dogs would have torn him to pieces, he and the boy. Yes, *père châtelain*, I had as much as I could do—Be quiet, Turk! here, Medor! down, Sultan! I have never seen them so much enraged. And yet on this farm they are never set at beggars, as they are in some places." "Ma foi, my children, the poor's portion has been reserved for some purpose. Sit closer—so! Put two more covers on, one for the blind man, the other for his son; for surely Madame Georges will let them pass the night here."

"It is very astonishing that the dogs should have been so furious," said Jean René to himself; "there was Turk, above all, that Claudine took with her to-night to the parsonage; he was like a possessed. When I patted him to appease him, his hair stood up like a porcupine. What do you say to that, heu! *père châtelain*, you who know everything?" "I say, mon garçon! I who know everything, that the dumb beasts know some things better than I do. During the hurricane this autumn, which changed the little

river into a torrent, when I returned at dark night, with my farm horses, seated on the old roan, may the devil take me, if I should have known how to pass the ford, for I couldn't see my hand before my face! Well! I laid the bridle on the neck of the old roan, and he found all alone what none of us could have found. Who taught him that?" "Yes, *père châtelain*; who taught him that, the old roan horse?" "He who teaches the swallows to build their nests under the eaves, and humming-birds in the midst of the rosebushes, *mon garçon*. Well! Claudine," said the old oracle to the dairy-maid, who entered carrying on her arm two pair of white sheets, diffusing an odour of sage and vervaine, "heui! Madame Georges has ordered the blind man and his boy to be kept here to-night, hasn't she?"

"Here are the sheets to make their beds in the little room at the end of the corridor," said Claudine. "Go, and bring them in, Jean René. You, my girl, place two chairs by the fire; they must warm themselves a little before they can eat: they must be very cold."

The noise of the dogs was again heard, and the voice of Jean René trying to appease them. The door of the kitchen was pushed open; the *Maitre d'Ecole* and Tortillard entered with precipitation, as if they had been pursued. "Take care of your dogs!" cried the *Maitre d'Ecole* in affright. "They came near biting us."

"They have torn a piece of my blouse," said Tortillard, still pale with fear. "Don't be afraid, my good man," said Jean René, shutting the door; "but I have never seen our dogs so wicked: sure it is the cold makes them cross. The beasts, perhaps, have reason; they wish, perhaps, to bite, by way of getting warm!"

"Now, your turn!" said the labourer, stopping old Lysander just at the moment, as, growling, he was about to spring on the new-comers. "He had heard the other dogs bark, and thinks he must do as they do. Will you go to sleep at once, old savage? will you?"

At these words of the *père châtelain*, accompanied by a significant kick, Lysander retired, still growling, to his usual place at the fire. The *Maitre d'Ecole* and Tortillard had remained at the door of the kitchen, not daring to advance.

Wrapped in a blue cloak with a fur collar, his hat drawn over his black cap, which almost concealed his face, the brigand held the hand of Tortillard, who leaned against him, looking at the peasant with defiance.

The features of the *Maitre d'Ecole* were so hideous, that the inhabitants of the farm remained for a moment stupefied, some with disgust, the others with affright; this impression did not escape Tortillard; the fear of the peasants reassured him; he was proud of the feelings his companion inspired. This first movement over, the *père châtelain*, only thinking of fulfilling the duties of hospitality, said to the *Maitre d'Ecole*, "My good man, draw near to the fire: you will first warm yourself. Afterward you will sup with us, for we were about to sit down when you came. There, sit there. But what a head I have! it is not to you, but to your son, I must speak, since you are, unfortunately, blind. Here, my child: conduct your father to the fire."

"Yes, my good sir," answered Tortillard, in a nasal and hypocritical voice; "may the 'bon Dieu' return your charity! Follow me! take care," added he to the brigand, guiding him to the fireplace. At first Lysander howled in a low

tone; but, having scented for a moment the *Maitre d'Ecole*, he uttered that kind of mournful cry which is commonly called the death-howl.

"Hell!" said the *Maitre d'Ecole* to himself; "is it, then, blood that these cursed animals scent? I wore these pantaloons the night of the assassination of the cattle-merchant." "I declare, it is astonishing," whispered Jean René: "old Lysander has set up the death-howl at the strangers."

The cries of Lysander were so piercing, so plaintive, that the other dogs heard it, and, according to the habits of the canine race, they repeated or answered these horrible howlings. Although but little superstitious, the labourers looked at one another with affright. And, truly, what was passing seemed very singular. A man they could not look at without horror entered the house; then the dogs, until then very quiet, became furious, and uttered those plaintive cries which, according to the popular belief, indicated the approaches of death.

The brigand himself, notwithstanding his infernal audacity, shuddered for a moment on hearing the funeral cries which burst forth on his arrival—he—an assassin.

Tortillard, skeptical, brazen, like a boy of Paris, corrupted, as we may say, at his mother's breast, alone remained indifferent at the moral effect of this scene. No longer afraid of being bitten, this miserable abortion laughed at that which alarmed the people of the farm, and made the *Maitre d'Ecole* shudder. The first surprise being over, Jean René went out, and the cracks of his whip could soon be heard, dissipating the mournful forebodings of Turk, Sultan, and Medor. At the end of a few moments the frightful ugliness of the *Maitre d'Ecole* inspired them more with pity than horror; they pitied the lameness of the little boy, and began to find his cunning face quite interesting, and praised much the great attention he showed to his papa.

The appetite of the people, for a moment forgotten, was awakened with new energy, and for some moments nothing was heard but the noise of the knives and forks. They could not, however, help remarking the tender care the child took of the blind man. Tortillard prepared everything for him, cut his bread, and poured out his drink with an attention quite filial. This was the fine side of the picture, now mark the reverse: as much from cruelty as by the spirit of imitation, natural at his age, Tortillard experienced a cruel enjoyment in tormenting the *Maitre d'Ecole*, from the example of La Chouette, whom he was proud thus to copy, and whom he loved with a kind of devotion. How this perverse child did he feel the need of being beloved? How did he feel happy from the semblance of affection shown him by La Chouette? How could he finally have been affected at the faint remembrance of the caresses of his mother? It was once more one of these frequent anomalies, which, from time to time, happily protest against unity in vice. We have said that feeling, like La Chouette, great pleasure in having (he a poor little boy) for a *bête de souffrance* a muzzled tiger. Tortillard, seated at the table, had the wickedness to refine his pleasures by forcing the *Maitre d'Ecole* to bear his ill-treatment without winking. He compensated, therefore, each of his ostensible attentions to his supposed father by a kick under the table, particularly addressed to the old wound in the leg, of which the *Maitre d'Ecole* had spoken.

It needed all his fortitude to conceal his sufferings at each kick of Tortillard, as the little wretch always took care to commence his attacks when the brigand was about to drink or speak. Nevertheless, he maintained his impassability of expression, concealing his rage and feelings, thinking (and the son of Bras-Rouge reckoned on it) that it would be very dangerous for the success of his designs, if they found out what was passing under the table. "Here, poor papa, here is a nut nicely picked," said Tortillard, placing on his plate a walnut plucked from its shell.

"Very good, my child," said the père châtelain; then addressing the brigand, "you are very much to be pitied, my good man; but you have such a fine son, it must be a great consolation to you!" "Yes, yes, my misfortune is great, but without the tenderness of this dear child, I—" The Maître d'Ecole could not repress a piercing cry.

The son of Bras-Rouge had this time hit the centre of the wound; the pain was excruciating. "Mon Dieu! what is the matter, poor dear papa?" cried Tortillard, in a tearful voice, and, getting up from his seat, he threw both his arms around his neck.

At the first movement of rage and anger the brigand had a mind to crush the child in his Herculean arms, and pressed him so closely to his breast, that the child, losing his breath, made a slight groan. But instantly reflecting that he could not do without his services, he let him go, and pushed him on his chair. In all this the peasant only saw an interchange of paternal and filial tenderness; the pallor and suffocation of Tortillard appeared to them to be caused by the emotion of this good son. "What is the matter, my good man?" asked the père châtelain. "Your cry just now has made your child pale. Poor little fellow! look, he can hardly breathe!" "It is nothing," answered the Maître d'Ecole, recovering his sang froid. "I am by trade a locksmith; sometime since, in working with the hammer a bar of iron, I let it fall on my legs, and it made such a deep burn, that it is not yet healed. Just now I hit it against the leg of the table, and I could not keep from screaming out." "Poor papa!" said Tortillard, recovered from his emotion, and casting a diabolical look at the Maître d'Ecole; "poor papa! yet it is true, my good gentlemen, they could never cure his leg. Alas! no, never! oh! I'd willing have it—so that he should no longer suffer, poor dear papa." The women looked at Tortillard with much affection. "Well, my good man," answered the père châtelain, "it is unfortunate for you that you did not come to the farm three weeks since, instead of to-night." "Why so?" "Because we had here for some days a doctor from Paris, who has a sovereign remedy for diseases of the leg. A good old woman of the village who hadn't walked for three years; the doctor applied some ointment—now she runs about like a Biscayan, and she means soon to walk to Paris to thank her saviour, Allée des Veuves, at Paris. You know it's a long road. But what is the matter? does the wound hurt you again?"

These words, Allée des Veuves, awakened such terrible recollections, that he could not refrain from shuddering and contracting his hideous features. "Yes," he answered, endeavouring to recover himself, "another spasm."

"Dear papa, be quiet, I'll rub your leg carefully to-night," said Tortillard. "Poor little fel-

low!" said Claudine. "how he loves his father!" "It is really a pity," continued the père Châtelain, addressing the Maître d'Ecole, "that this worthy doctor is not here; but I know he is as charitable as he is learned; in returning to Paris, let your son conduct you there, he will cure you, I am sure of it; his address is not difficult to remember, Allée des Veuves, No. 17. If you forget the number, no matter; there are not many doctors in that quarter, above all black doctors—for you must know he is black, this excellent Doctor David."

The features of the Maître d'Ecole were so dreadfully scarred, that his paleness could not be perceived. Nevertheless, he turned pale, frightfully pale, first at hearing the number of the house, and then the name of David, the black physician.

Of this black, who, by orders of Rodolphe, had inflicted on him a terrible punishment, of which at each moment he suffered the horrid consequences. This was a fatal day for the Maître d'Ecole. The morning he had endured the tortures of La Chouette and the son of Bras-Rouge; he arrives at the farm, the dogs raise the death-howl at his appearance, and wish to devour him; finally, chance conducts him to a house where some days sooner he would have met his executioner. Separately, these circumstances would have been enough to excite both the rage and fear of the brigand, but coming all at once, the blow was too violent. For the first time in his life he experienced a kind of superstitious terror—he asked himself if chance alone could have brought about incidents so strange.

The père châtelain, not perceiving the agitation of the Maître d'Ecole, continued: "Besides, my good man, when you go, we will give the address of the doctor to your son; it will oblige M. David to put him in the way of serving any one; he is so good, so good! it is a pity he always looks so sad. But come—let us drink a glass to the health of your future saviour."

"Thank you—I am not thirsty."

"Drink, then, dear good papa, drink, it will do you good—good for your stomach," added Tortillard, placing a glass in the hands of the blind man.

"No, no, I don't want to drink any more," answered he. "It isn't cider, but old wine," said the labourer; "there are many 'bourgeois' who don't drink half so good. Marry! this is no common farm—what do you think of our ordinary?" "It is very good," answered the Maître d'Ecole, mechanically, more and more absorbed with his sinister thoughts.

"Well! it is every day just so; hard work and good repast, good conscience and good bed; in four words behold our life: we are seven cultivators here, and without boasting we do as much as fourteen, but then we are paid as fourteen. To the daily labourers, one hundred and fifty crowns per month; to the dairy-maids sixty crowns; and, besides, we have one-fifth of what the farm produces. Marry! you can comprehend that we don't let the land have much rest; for the poor old nurse, the more she produces the more we have."

"Your master can get very rich by these means," said the Maître d'Ecole. "Our master? oh! a very different master from most masters. He has a way to get rich peculiar to himself." "What do you mean to say?" asked the blind man, who wished to enter into conversation to get rid of his gloomy thoughts; "your

master must be an extraordinary man?" "Extraordinary in every respect, my good man; but stop, chance has brought you here, since this village is some distance from the high road. You, perhaps, will never return here; you shall not leave it, at least, without knowing who our master is, and what he does with this farm; in two words, I am going to tell you this on condition you will repeat it to everybody. You will see—it is as good to tell as to listen to."

"I listen," answered the Maître d'Ecole.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MODEL FARM.

"And you will not be sorry," said the père châtelain. "Just imagine, one day our master said to himself, 'I am very rich, good; but that don't make me eat two dinners. If I were to make those dine who don't dine at all, and better even than those good people who can't always get enough? 'Ma foi,' that suits me—to work! And our master did go to work. He bought this farm, which then was of no great value, and did not employ more than three ploughs; I know this, for I was born here. Our master added more ground—you shall know directly wherefore. At the head of the farm he placed a worthy woman, as respectable as she was unfortunate—that is the way he always chooses. He said to her: 'This house shall be like the house of God, open to the good, but shut to the wicked; lazy beggars must be driven away, but to those who are willing to work, always give assistance: this will not humiliate those who receive, but will profit those who give; the rich who are not charitable do not deserve their riches.' It is our master who has said this; but, 'ma foi,' he did more than say it—he acted. Formerly there was a road direct from here to Ecouen, which shortened the distance a good league; but, marry! it was so broken up, so rough, that no one could pass; it was death to the horses and carriages; a little labour and some money, furnished by the neighbouring farmers, would have put the road in order; but just as much as every one wished to see the road mended, just so much did every one hold back the labour and money. Our master seeing this, said, 'The road must be made; but as those who should contribute do not, as it is an accommodation road, it will be of service to those who have horses and carriages one of these days, but it shall profit first those who have but their two arms, industry, and courage.' Thus, for example, a stout fellow, does he knock at the door, saying, 'I am hungry, and I want to work.' 'Mon garçon, here is some good soup, a pick-axe, and a shovel; some will show you the Ecouen road; grade twelve feet each day, and at night you shall have forty sous, six feet twenty sous, three feet ten sous, otherwise nothing. I will inspect the work every evening and see what each one has done.'"

"And when you think that there are too scoundrels mean enough to eat the soup, and steal the pick-axe and spade!" said Jean René, with indignation, "that must have disgusted him with doing good." "That's true," said several of the labourers.

"Come, my children!" continued the père châtelain, "only see, one should not plant nor sow, because there are caterpillars, or devils, and other vermin which destroy the leaves or

consume the grain? No, no, the worms must be destroyed; the 'bon Dieu,' ever bountiful, causes new buds to shoot forth, new corn to grow; the damage is repaired, and it is hardly to be perceived that the worm has passed there. Is it not so, my good man?" said the old labourer to the Maître d'Ecole. "Without doubt, without doubt," answered he, seeming to reflect profoundly.

"As for women and children, there is also work for them, according to their strength, added the père châtelain.

"And yet," said Claudine, "the road does not get along fast." "Marry! my girl, that proves that there are not many wanting work in these parts."

"But for an infirm person, like me, for example," said the Maître d'Ecole, suddenly, "will they not grant me, for charity's sake, a place for shelter, a piece of bread for the short time that remains for me to live? Oh! if that could be, my good people, I'd pass the rest of my life in blessing your master."

The brigand spoke then sincerely. He did not repent of his crimes, but the peaceable and happy life of the labourers excited so much the more his envy, when he thought of the frightful future reserved for him by La Chouette; a future he had been far from anticipating, and which made him regret still more in having sent for his accomplice, which prevented forever the possibility of living again with the honest people the Chourineur had placed him with. The père châtelain looked at him with astonishment. "But, my poor man," said he, "I did not think you were entirely without resources?"

"Alas! mon Dieu, yes. I lost my eyesight by an accident. I am going to Louvres to seek assistance from a distant relation; but you understand; people sometimes are so selfish, so hard-hearted," said the Maître d'Ecole.

"Oh! no one could be so selfish," answered the père châtelain: "a good, an honest workman as you are, unfortunate, with such a nice child, so good a son, would soften a stone. But the master who employed you before your accident, why doesn't he help you?" "He is dead," said the Maître d'Ecole, after a moment's hesitation; "he was my only friend."

"But the hospital for the blind?" "I am not old enough to enter." "Poor man! you are much to be pitied!"

"Well, do you think that, if I do not find at Louvres the assistance that I hope for, that your master, whom I respect already without knowing him, would have pity on me?"

"Unfortunately, do you see, the farm is not an hospital? ordinarily, we allow the infirm to pass a night or day here, then we give them some money, and the bon Dieu has them in his holy keeping." "Then I have no hope to interest your master in my sad fate?" said the brigand, with a sigh of regret. "I tell you our rules, my good man; but our master is so generous, so kind, that he is capable of doing everything."

"You think so?" cried the Maître d'Ecole; "can it be possible that he would consent to let me live here in a corner? I should be happy with so little."

"I tell you our master is capable of doing anything. If he consents to keep you on the farm, you will not have to conceal yourself in a corner; you would be treated as we are; then, like to-day, we would find something for your son to do suitable to his age and strength; good

counsels and good examples would not be wanting for him; our venerable curé would instruct him with the other children of the village, and he would grow up in grace, as is said. But for all this, you must speak to-morrow morning frankly to *Nôtre Dame de Bon-Secours*." "What?" said the *Maitre d'Ecole*. "We call our mistress so. If she becomes interested for you, your business is done. As regards charity, our master never refuses anything to our lady."

"Oh, then I will speak to her; I will speak to her!" cried the *Maitre d'Ecole*, joyously, already imagining himself delivered from the tyranny of *La Chouette*.

This hope found no echo in Tortillard, who felt no disposition to profit by the offers of the old labourer, and grow up in grace under the auspices of a venerable curé. The son of *Bras-Rouge* had no rural pendants, and not at all a pastoral turn of mind; besides, faithful to the traditions of *La Chouette*, he would have seen with lively displeasure the *Maitre d'Ecole* withdraw himself from their common despotism; he wished, therefore, to recall to the reality the brigand, who was wandering already amid rustic and smiling illusions.

"Oh, yes!" repeated the *Maitre d'Ecole*, "I will speak to her, to *Nôtre Dame de Bon-Secours*; she will have pity on me, and—"

Tortillard gave him at this moment, quietly, a vigorous kick, and touched the right spot. The pain interrupted and abridged the phrase of the brigand, who repeated, after a nervous shuddering, "Yes, I hope that this good lady will have pity on me." "Poor dear papa!" said Tortillard; "but you reckon, then, for nothing my good aunt, *Madame la Chouette*, who loves you so much? Poor Aunt *la Chouette*! oh! she will never abandon you in this way! do you see? She would sooner come and reclaim you with our Cousin *Barbillion*." "This good man has relations among the fishes and birds," whispered Jean René, maliciously, and giving a blow with his elbow to Claudine, his neighbour.

"Get out; no heart! to laugh at these unfortunate beings," answered, in a low tone, the dairy-maid, giving in her turn a blow with her elbow to Jean René, hard enough to break almost his ribs. "Madame *la Chouette* is one of your relations?" asked the labourer of the *Maitre d'Ecole*.

"Yes, one of our relations," answered he, mournfully.

Supposing that he should find at the farm a place of unhoped-for refuge, he feared that the *Borgnesse*, through wickedness, would come and denounce him; he feared also that the strange names of his pretended relations, *Madame la Chouette* and *M. Barbillion*, mentioned by Tortillard, might awaken their suspicions; but as regards this his fears were in vain; Jean René saw only the chance for a joke, which was very badly received by Claudine. "Is this the relation you go to seek at *Louvres*?" asked the *père châtelain*.

"Yes," said the brigand; "but I think my son is wrong in reckoning too much on her."

"Oh! my poor papa, I am not deceived; no; she is so good, my Aunt *la Chouette*. You know very well it is she who sent you water with which I dress your leg, and told me how to use it. It was she who said, 'Do for your poor papa what I would do myself, and the bon Dieu will bless you!' Oh! my Aunt *la Chouette*; she loves you, but she loves you so much, that—"

"It is well, it is well," said the *Maitre d'Ecole*, interrupting Tortillard; "that will not prevent my speaking to the lady to-morrow, and implore her assistance in my favour with the respectable proprietor of this farm; but," added he, to change the conversation and put a stop to the impudent talking of Tortillard, "but, concerning this farm, you promised to tell me what there was particular in the organization, or in what respects it differed from other farms."

"I promise you this," said the *père châtelain*; "and I am going to fulfil my promise. Our master, after having thus imagined what he called the alms of labour, said to himself, 'There are establishments for the encouragement of the breed of horses, cattle, improvements in ploughs, and many other things—'ma foi!' My opinion is, that it would be time well spent to invest something to ameliorate, to improve men. Good cattle is very well; good people will be much better, but more difficult. With heavy oats and fine pasture, clear water, and pure air, constant care and good shelter, horses and cattle will thrive to your wishes, and give satisfaction; but for man, ah! it is another thing; it is not so easy to make a man good and honest as it is to make an ox fat. The pasturage profits the beast, because, grateful to his taste, it pleases as well as fattens him; well, my opinion is, that to make a man profit by good counsels, you must make him sensible that it is to his advantage to follow them."

"Just as the ox finds it to his account to eat the fine grass; is it not, *père châtelain*?" "Just so, mon garçon."

"But, *père châtelain*," said another labourer, "I have heard of a kind of farm where young criminals, who, notwithstanding this, behaved very well, learned agriculture, and were treated like young princes." "It is true, my children, and it is very praiseworthy; it is humane and charitable never to despair of the wicked; but we must also make the good not despair. An honest, industrious young man, being desirous to do right, and learn to work, presenting himself to this farm of young ex-robbers, would be asked, 'My boy, are you anything of a robber, or a vagabond?' 'No.' 'Well! there's no place for you here.'"

"It is quite true what you say, *père châtelain*," said Jean René. "They do for rogues what they will not do for honest men; they improve the beasts, but not the men."

"It is to set an example, and remedy this, that our master, as I tell this good man, has established this farm. I know well," said he, "that there is a recompense for honest folks above; but above—marry! it is far off—above! and many (we must pity them, my children) have not sharp enough eyes, nor long enough breath, to reach there; and, besides, where will they find time to look above? During the day, from sunrise to sunset, bent to the earth, they dig and redig it again for their masters; the night, worn out, they sleep on their truckle beds. On Sundays they get drunk at the taverns, to forget the fatigues of yesterday and those of the morrow: and thus it is these labours produce nothing for these poor people! After their hard work, is their bread less black, their bed any softer, their children less puny, their wives any stronger, to nourish them—nourish them! she who has no bread to eat when she is hungry! no! no! no! But, notwithstanding all this, I know well, my children, that their bread is black, but it is bread;

hard is their couch, but it is a bed; sickly are their children, but they live. The unfortunate children would, perhaps, support their fate lightly, if they thought every one lived as they did. But they go to the city or the town on market days, and there they see white bread, thick and warm mattresses, children blooming like the roses of May, and so surfeited that they throw cakes to the dogs. Marry! then, on returning to their clay hovels, their black bread, their truckle beds, these poor people say, seeing their poor, suffering, emaciated, starving child, to whom they would gladly have brought one of the cakes they saw thrown to the dogs, 'Since there must be rich and poor, why were we not born rich? it is unjust. Why shouldn't each one have a turn?' Without doubt, my children, what they say is very unreasonable, and does not serve to make the yoke any lighter; and yet this yoke, hard and heavy as it is, they are destined to bear forever, with no hope of lightening it, and no hope of knowing, some day, the happiness arising from prosperity. All their lives in that manner—marry! it seems long—long as a day of continued rain without one little gleam of sunshine. Then they go to work in sorrow and disgust. Finally, the most of them say, 'Why should we work harder or longer? if the harvest is heavy or light, what is it to us! why tire ourselves for nothing? Let us remain strictly honest; crime is punished, let us commit no crimes; to do well is without recompense, let us not do well; let us have the qualities of good beasts of burden: patience, strength, and docility.' These thoughts are all wrong, my children; from this feeling to idleness there is no great distance; and from idleness to vice there is still less. Unfortunately, those who, neither good nor bad, do neither good nor bad, are of the greatest number; it is, then, those, said our master, whose condition we must ameliorate, neither more nor less than if they had had the honour to have been horses, or cattle with horns on their head, and wood on their backs. Let us make it their interest to be active, wise, laborious, instructed, devoted to their duties; let us prove to them that, in becoming better, they will become materially happier: every one will profit by it, and so that they will profit by good counsels, give them here below a taste of the happiness that awaits them above. His plan made, our master gave notice in the neighbourhood that he wanted six labourers, and as many girls, for the farm; but he wished to select these from the best people in the district—those who could bring the best recommendations. They would be well paid as we are, that is to say, like princes, nourished better than the 'bourgeois,' and should have divided among them one fifth of the whole products; they should remain two years on the farm, to give place to other labourers chosen on the same conditions; after five years, they could return again if there was any vacancy. Thus, since the establishment of the farm, labourers and workmen in the vicinity say, 'Let us be active, honest, and industrious; let us be remarked for our good conduct, and some day we may get a place on the farm of Bouqueval; there we will live as if in paradise for two years; we will improve in our calling, we will carry off a snug little sum, and then we can command any place, having been at the Bouqueval farm, being our recommendation.' 'I am already engaged to go on the farm of Arnouville, at M. Dubreuil's,' said Jean René. 'And I am engaged for Gonesse,' answered another labourer.

"You see, my good man, in this way every one profits: the farmers of the environs doubly profit; there are only twelve places to give, but there are more than fifty candidates; now, those who can't obtain the place, are none the less deserving, is it not so? and, as they say, better luck next time; they remain, and make so many the more good people in the neighbourhood. Look here (with all respect), for one horse who gains the prize at a race, there are always a number to dispute the prize; well, those who don't gain, still they are very valuable, and can try another time. Hei! my good man, when I told you that our farm was no ordinary one, and that our master was no common master—did I speak false?" "Oh no," cried the Maître d'Ecole, "and the more his goodness, his generosity, seems great, the more I hope he will have pity on my sad fate. A man who does so much good, so nobly, with so much intelligence, can never regard one benefaction more or less. But let me know at least his name, and that of the Dame de Bon-Secours," said the Maître d'Ecole earnestly, "that I may bless them in advance."

"I can comprehend your impatience," said the labourer; "ah! marry, you no doubt expect to hear high sounding names? ah, yes! they are names as sweet and gentle as those of the saints. Notre Dame de Bon-Secours is called Madame Georges; our master's name is Rodolphe." "My wife! my executioner!" murmured the brigand, thunderstruck at this revelation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE NIGHT.

RODOLPHE!! Madame Georges!!

The maître could not believe that he had been deceived by a fortuitous resemblance of names; before he had inflicted the terrible punishment, Rodolphe had told him that he had for Madame Georges the liveliest interest. And, then, the presence of the negro David proved to the Maître d'Ecole that he had not been mistaken. He recognised something providential, a fatality, at this discovery, which overthrew the hopes that he had founded on the generosity of the master of this farm.

His first movement was to fly. Rodolphe inspired him with invincible terror; perhaps at this moment he might be at the farm. Hardly had he recovered from his stupor, than he rose from the table, took the hand of Tortillard, and cried in a wild manner, "Let us go—conduct me—let us go hence!"

The labourers looked at one another in surprise.

"You go! now? You must not think of it, my poor man," said the père châtelain. "Ah! come, what bee has stung you? are you a fool?" Tortillard, seizing adroitly this idea, breathed a deep sigh, nodded his head in the affirmative, and, putting his finger on his forehead, he gave the labourers to understand that the reason of his pretended father was not very strong. The old labourer answered with a sign of intelligence and compassion. "Come, come, let us go!" repeated the Maître d'Ecole, seeking to drag the child out. Tortillard, absolutely deciding not to leave a warm shelter to wander about the fields this cold night, said, in a moaning voice,

"Mon Dieu! poor papa, calm yourself; the attack will soon pass off; don't go out such a cold night, it will do you harm. I would prefer to see you angry with me, than to take you from here at such an hour." Then, addressing the labourers, he said, "Won't you help me to prevent my poor papa from going out, my good gentlemen?" "Yes, yes! be easy, my child," said the père châtelain; "we will not open the door for your father—we will make him sleep here!" "You shall not force me to remain here!" cried the Maître d'Ecole; "and, besides, I'll incommode your master, Monsieur Rodolphe. You told me the farm was not an hospital. Thus, once more, I say, let me go." "Incommode our master? Be easy. Unfortunately, he does not live at the farm, he does not come as often as we should wish. But if he was here, you would not incommode him at all. This house is not an hospital, it is true; but I told you that the infirm, as much to be pitied as you are, can always have a lodging."

"Your master is not here, then, to-night?" said the Maître d'Ecole, in a more assured tone. "No! he will probably come, according to custom, in five or six days. Thus, you see, there is no reason in your objections. It is not probable that our good lady will come down to-night, otherwise she would convince you. Has she not ordered your bed to be made? Besides, if you don't see her to-night, you can speak to her to-morrow before your departure." "No, no!" said the brigand, in alarm; "I have changed my mind. My son was right; my relation at Louvres will take pity on me. I will go and find her." "As you please," said the père châtelain, believing he was conversing with a crazy man. "You shall go to-morrow morning; but as for setting out to-night, don't think of it." Although Rodolphe was not at the farm, the fears of the Maître d'Ecole were not quieted; notwithstanding he was so frightfully disfigured, he still dreaded that his wife might recognise him. And she might come in from one moment to another; in that case, he doubted not but that she would denounce him, and cause him to be arrested, persuaded that, in inflicting the terrible punishment, Rodolphe had, above all, satisfied the hatred and vengeance of Madame Georges. But he could not leave the farm; he found himself at the mercy of Tortillard. He resigned himself, then, to his situation; but, to avoid being surprised by his wife, he said to the labourer, "Since you assure me that I shall put you to no trouble, I accept the hospitality you offer me; but as I am very much fatigued, I will go to bed, if you will allow me; I wish to start to-morrow at daylight."

"Oh! to-morrow morning, when you please! we are early risers here; and for fear that you may be lost again, some one will show you the road." "I will, if you wish, conduct the poor man," said Jean René; "since madame has told me to take the cart to bring home some bags of silver from the notary at Villiers-le-Bel." "You will show the road to this poor blind man, but you will go on your legs," said the père châtelain; "madame has changed her minds; she has reflected, and not without reason, that it was not worth while to have so large

a sum of money at the farm; it will be time enough to go after the money on Monday; until then, it is as well there as here."

"Madame knows better than me what to do; but what is there to fear here, for money, père châtelain?"

"Nothing, mon garçon, 'Dieu merci!' But it is all the same; I would prefer to have here five hundred sacks of wheat, than ten sacks of crowns. Come," said he, addressing the brigand and the little Tortillard; "come, my good man, and you, my child, follow me," added he, taking a candle. Then, preceding the two guests of the farm, he conducted them to a small chamber, at the end of a long corridor, into which opened several doors.

The ploughman placed the light on the table, and said to the Maître d'Ecole, "Here is your lodging-place; may the 'bon Dieu' give you a good night's rest, my good man! as to you, my child, you will sleep well, it belongs to your years."

The brigand went and seated himself gloomily on the bed, to which he had been conducted by Tortillard. The little cripple made a sign to the ploughman as he left the room, and joined him in the corridor. "What do you want, my child?" asked the père châtelain. "Mon Dieu! my good sir, I am much to be pitied! sometimes poor papa has spasms in the night, like convulsions; I cannot help him all alone; if I am obliged to call for help, can they hear me from here?"

"Poor little fellow," said the ploughman, with interest; "be comforted. Do you see that door there, alongside of the staircase?"

"Yes, my good sir, I see it." "Well! one of our boys always sleeps there; you have only to go and wake him, the key is in the door; he will come and assist you."

"Alas! sir, this boy, perhaps, will not be strong enough. Could you not come, you who are so good, so kind?"

"I, my child! I sleep, as well as the other men, in a building away at the end of the court; but be quite easy, Jean René is very strong; he would take a bull by the horns. Besides, if you should actually need some one to assist you, he will go and call our old cook; she sleeps up stairs, in a room alongside of our lady, and, in case of need, she makes an excellent nurse."

"Oh! thank you, thank you! my good sir; I will go and pray for you, for you are very charitable to have so much pity for my poor papa." "Well, my child, good-night. I hope you will have no need of assistance for your father; go in, perhaps he wants you." "I go; good-night, sir." "God bless you, my child!" said the old ploughman; and he slowly retraced his steps to the kitchen.

Hardly was his back turned, than the little cripple made a movement supremely ridiculous and insulting, well known to the boys of Paris; this consists in striking the nape of the neck with the palm of the left hand, repeatedly, and each time extending forth the right hand wide open.

With diabolical cunning, this dangerous child already had ascertained the information desired by La Chouette. He knew already that the building where he was to sleep was

only occupied by Madame Georges, Fleur-de-Marie, an old cook, and a farmboy. Tortillard, on entering the bedchamber, took good care to keep at a convenient distance from the brigand. He heard him come in, and said to him in a low tone, "Where do you come from now, scoundrel?" "You are very curious, No-eyes." "Oh! you shall pay for all you have made me suffer and endure this night, you devil's imp!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, getting up furiously and groping his way along the wall to guide him. "I'll choak you! you wicked serpent!"

"Poor papa; we are so gay, playing blind-man's buff with our dear child," said Tortillard, chuckling and escaping in the easiest way the pursuits of the Maître d'Ecole. He, at first carried away, without reflecting, with rage, was soon obliged to give up the chase. Forced to submit to his brazen persecution, until the time should arrive that he could revenge himself without danger, the brigand, choking down his powerless anger, threw himself on the bed, swearing and cursing.

"Poor papa, have you the toothache, that you swear in this manner? And 'M. le Curé,' what would he say if he heard you? he'll make you perform penance."

"Well! well!" continued the brigand after a long silence, "laugh at me, amuse yourself with my misfortunes, coward as you are! It is all very fine; ah! it is very generous." "Oh! what stuff! generous! you are in a pet!" cried Tortillard, shouting with laughter; "pardon me! with such ideas as those, you ought to have worn mittens when you did the business for those you robbed, before you became blind in both eyes!"

"But I have never done you any harm—you. Why do you torment me thus?" "Because, in the first place, you said bad things to La Chouette; and when I think, the gentleman wished to stay here, by wheedling the peasants—perhaps the gentleman would like to live on asses' milk?" "Scoundrel as you are! If there had been any possibility of my remaining here, at this farm, which I wish the thunder may strike now! you would almost have prevented it with your insolence."

"You remain here! oh, that's a good joke! and who would have been the *'beast of suffering'* for Madame la Chouette? Me! perhaps? Thank you, I'd rather be excused!"

"Wicked abortion!" "Abortion! come, so much the more reason; I say just like my Aunt la Chouette, there is nothing more amusing than to make you as mad as the devil—you, who would kill me with your fist; it is much more delicate than if you were weak. You are a funny fellow—get out—to-night at the table—*Dieu de Dieu!* what a comedy I played all alone by myself—equal to anything at La Gaité! At each kick I gave you quietly, rage brought the blood to your head, and your white eyes became red at the edges; they only wanted a little blue in the centre; with that, they would have been tricoloured; two real cockades for a constable—what!"

"Come, come, you love to laugh, you are lively; bah! it is natural at your age; I am not angry," said the Maître d'Ecole, in an affected and unconcerned manner, hoping to soft-

en Tortillard; "but, instead of blackguarding me, you'd better remember what La Chouette told you, she whom you love so much; you ought to examine everything, and take impressions. Did you hear? they spoke of a large sum of money that they are to have here on Monday. We will return with our friends, and we will do some good business. Bah! I was a great fool to wish to stay here. I should have had enough in a week of these good-natured peasants. Is it not so, my boy?" said the brigand, by way of flattering Tortillard. "You really would have given me pain—word of honour," said the son of Bras-Rouge, chuckling.

"Yes, yes, there is a good affair to be done here; and even if there is nothing to steal, I will return to this house with La Chouette to revenge myself," said the brigand, in a voice trembling with rage and passion; "for it certainly was my wife who excited against me this infernal Rodolphe; in making me blind, has he not placed me at the mercy of the whole world, of La Chouette, of a chap like you? Well! since I cannot be revenged on him, I will be revenged on my wife! Yes, she shall pay for all; even if I have to set fire to this house, and perish myself under its ruins. Oh! I wish—" "You wish you had hold of her, your wife, hey! old man! I tell you she is not ten steps from you; that is vexing! If I pleased, I'd conduct you to the door of her chamber, for I know where it is. I know, I know, I know!" added, or, rather, chanted Tortillard.

"You know which is her chamber?" cried the Maître d'Ecole, with savage joy; "you know?"

"Ah! come now," said Tortillard; "I am going to make you beg on your hind legs, like a dog asking for a bone. Attention, old Azor!"

"You know where is the room of my wife?" repeated the brigand, turning towards Tortillard. "Yes, I know; and what is more, there is only one of the boys who sleeps in the house; I know where is his door, the key is in it: crack! one turn, and he is fixed. Come! stand up, old Azor!" "Who told you this?" cried the brigand, rising involuntarily. "Good Azor, in the room next to your wife's sleeps the old cook; another turn of a key, and we are masters of the house, masters of your wife, and of the young girl in the gray mantle, whom we wish to carry off. Now, give us your paw, old Azor; hold up your head for your master, right away!"

"You lie, you lie! How could you know all this?"

"I am lame, but I am not a fool. Just now, I made this old fool of a ploughman believe that, during the night you had convulsions, and he asked him where I could find assistance; he needed it. Then he told me I might wake by boy or the cook, and he showed me where, adown, slept—the one below, the other above, and a consider of your wife, your wife, your wife!" answered Tortillard, chanting as usual.

After a long silence, the Maître d'Ecole, in a calm voice, with sincere but frightful resolution,

"Listen. I have had enough of life. Just now—well—yes—I acknowledge it—I had no hope, which now makes my fate appear still to

more frightful; the prison, the galleys, the guillotine, are nothing compared to what I have endured since this morning; and this I shall have to endure forever. Conduct me to the chamber of my wife; I have my knife—I will kill her. I shall be killed afterward; it's all the same to me. Hatred suffocates me—I shall be revenged—that will comfort me. What I now endure is too much—is too much for me, before whom every one trembled. Stop! do you hear! if you knew what I suffered, you would have pity on me. How, now! it seems as if my head would burst—my brain is on fire—my blood will suffocate me."

"A cold in the head, old man! I know it. Sneeze; it will clear it out," said Tortillard, screaming with laughter. "Will you have a pinch?" And striking the back of his left hand closed, as if he had struck a snuff-box, he sung,

"In my box I have good snuff,
You shan't have any, that's enough.

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! they wish to make me mad!" cried the brigand, becoming almost insane, from a concentration of hatred, rage, and implacable revenge. The exuberance of the strength of this monster could only be equalled by its impotence.

Let the reader imagine a famished wolf, harassed during an entire day by a child through the bars of his cage, and scenting at two steps from him a victim which would at once satisfy his hunger and rage. At the last sarcasm of Tortillard, the brigand almost lost his senses. In default of a victim, he wished, in his madness, to shed his own blood. Blood choked him.

For a moment he was decided to kill himself; if he had had a loaded pistol in his hand, he had not hesitated. He fumbled in his pocket and drew out a long knife, opened it, and raised it to strike; but, rapid as were these movements, reflection, fear, vital instinct, preceded them. Courage was wanting to the murderer; his arm fell on his knees.

Tortillard had followed these movements with an attentive eye; when he saw the inoffensive denouement of this tragic velleity, he cried, chuckling, "Waiter, a duel! *plumez des canards*." The Maître d'Ecole, fearing that he should lose his reason in a last and useless burst of rage, did not wish, as we may say, to hear this new insult of Tortillard. Despairing to escape from that which he called the cruelty of the child, the brigand wished to make a last effort, by addressing himself to the cupidity of the son of Bras-Rouge.

"Oh!" said he to him, in a voice almost supplicating, "conduct me to the door of my wife; you shall take what you wish from her chamber, and then leave me alone; you shall murder, if you will! I shall be arrested, I shall be killed on the spot; so much the better. I shall die revenged. Oh! lead me; you must be some gold, some jewels in her chamber; I tell you you shall take all—for your pocket alone—do you understand? for yourself alone. I only ask you to lead me to her door." "Yes, I understand well; you wish I should lead you to her door, and then to her bed, and then that I should tell you where to strike, and then that I should guide your hand: is it not so? you wish that I should serve as a handle to your knife, old monster!" answered Tortil-

lard, with an expression of contempt; of rage, and of horror, which, for the first time during that day, rendered serious his weasel face, heretofore impudent and bold. "I would be killed first—do you understand!—than to be forced to conduct you to your wife." "You refuse?" The son of Bras-Rouge made no answer. He drew near with naked feet to the Maître d'Ecole, who was seated on the bed holding his large knife in his hand; then with marvellous dexterity snatched the weapon, and with one bound gained the other side of the chamber. "My knife! my knife!" cried the brigand, stretching out his arms. "No, for you would be capable to ask to speak to your wife to-morrow, and then kill her, since you say you have enough of life, and you are coward enough not to dare to kill yourself."

"He defends my wife, now!" cried the bandit, whose mind began to wander. "Is he a devil, then, this little monster? Where am I? Why does he defend her?" "To make you mad," said Tortillard, and his expression resumed its mask of impudent raillery. "Ah! it is so!" murmured the Maître d'Ecole, almost in a state of insanity; "well! I shall set fire to the house! We will burn all together! all! I prefer this furnace to the other. The candle—the candle!" "Ah! ah! ah!" cried Tortillard, bursting out with renewed laughter; "if some one had not blown out your candle—yours—forever, you would see that ours has been out for an hour." And Tortillard sung,

"Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu."

The Maître d'Ecole uttered a heavy groan, stretched out his arms, and fell at full length upon the floor; struck with a rush of blood to his head, he remained without movement.

"I understand, old man!" said Tortillard; "it's a feint to bring me alongside of you, and fetch me a clip. When you are tired of lying on the floor, you'll get up."

And the son of Bras-Rouge, decided not to go to sleep, for fear of being surprised by the Maître d'Ecole, remained seated on his chair, with his eyes attentively fixed upon the brigand, persuaded that it was only a snare laid for him, and that he was in no danger. To employ himself agreeably, he drew from his pocket a small purse of red silk, and counted slowly, with greedy eyes, the seventeen pieces of gold it contained.

The reader will recollect that Rodolphe, in giving the purse to Madame d'Harville, the day of the fatal rendezvous, had told her to go up to the garret of the Morels under pretence of giving them assistance. Madame d'Harville mounted the staircase rapidly, holding the purse in her hand, when Tortillard, descending from the quack's, spied the purse, pretended to fall in passing the marchioness, giving her a violent push, and in the confusion carried it off. Madame d'Harville, alarmed, and hearing the steps of her husband, hurried on to the garret, without having the power to complain of the audacious robbery of the little lame boy.

After having counted and recounted his gold, Tortillard, hearing no more noise about the house, went with naked feet, cautiously sliding the candle with his hand, to take impressions of the locks of the four doors which open-

ed on the corridor, ready to say, if he should be seen by any one, that he sought assistance for his father.

On entering, he found the Maitre d'Ecole in the same position; for a moment alarmed, he listened, and heard that he breathed regularly; he believed he was still playing his game. "Always the same, then, old man!" said he to him.

Chance had saved the Maitre d'Ecole from a congestion of the brain which, no doubt, would have been mortal. His fall had occasioned a copious bleeding at the nose.

He afterward fell into a sort of feverish torpor, half sleep half delirium, and then he dreamed this strange, this frightful dream!

CHAPTER X.

THE DREAM.

THIS was the dream of the Maitre d'Ecole:

He saw Rodolphe in the house of the Allée des Veuves. Nothing is changed in the saloon where the brigand underwent his horrible punishment. Rodolphe is seated behind the table, on which are placed the papers of the Maitre d'Ecole, and the little Saint-Esprit of lapis-lazuli which he had given to La Chouette. The face of Rodolphe is grave and sad. At his right the negro David, impassible, silent, stands erect; at his left is the Chourineur; he regards the scene with an alarmed air. The Maitre d'Ecole is no longer blind, but he sees through limpid blood, which fills the sockets of his eyes. Every object appeared of a red colour. Like as the birds of prey hover in the air over the victim they charm, before devouring, a monstrous owl, having for a head the hideous visage of the Borgnesse, hovers over the Maitre d'Ecole. She fixes on him continually a round, flaming, greenish eye. This continued regard bears on his heart with an immense weight.

As he becomes habituated to the obscurity, he sees objects that at first were imperceptible; an immense lake of blood seems to separate him from the table where Rodolphe is sitting. This inflexible judge, as well as the Chourineur and the negro, assume, by degrees, colossal proportions. These three phantoms at length touch the ceiling, which gives way to them. The lake of blood is calm, smooth as a red mirror. The Maitre d'Ecole sees reflected his horrible image. But soon this image is effaced by the agitation of the waves, which now begin to rise. From their agitated surface comes up, like the fetid exhalation of a swamp, a livid fog—livid like the lips of the dead. But, as this vapour rises, the figures of Rodolphe, of the Chourineur, and of the negro, continue to increase—to increase in a manner not to be described. In the midst of this mist the Maitre d'Ecole sees appear pale spectres, murderous scenes in which he has been an actor. At first he sees a little old man, with a bald head, who wears a brown coat, and a green shade over his eyes; he is occupied, in a miserable chamber, in counting piles of gold, by the light of a lamp. Through the window, by the light of a pale moon, which silvers the tops of some tall trees agitated by the wind, the Maitre

d'Ecole sees himself outside: his hideous face is pressed against the window. He follows the smallest movements of the little old man with flaming eyes; then he breaks a glass—opens the window—springs with one bound on his victim—and plunges a long knife between his shoulders. The action is so rapid, the blow so prompt, so sure, that the corpse of the old man remains seated in his chair. The murderer endeavours to withdraw his knife from this dead body. He cannot. He redoubles his efforts. They are vain. Then he wishes to abandon the knife. Impossible. The hand of the assassin holds on to the handle of the poniard, like the blade holds to the body of the assassinated. The murderer hears then the sound of spurs and swords which strike the ground in a neighbouring apartment. To make his escape at all hazards, he tries to carry with him the dead body, from which he can neither detach his hand nor his knife. He fails in the attempt. This frail small corpse weighs like a mass of lead. Notwithstanding his Herculean shoulders, notwithstanding his desperate efforts, the Maitre d'Ecole cannot even raise this enormous weight. The key turns in the lock—the noise increases—the door opens. The vision fades away, and then the owl flaps his wings and cries, "*This is old Richard of the Rue du Roule. Your debut as assassin! assassin! assassin!*" For a moment obscured, the vapour which covers the lake of blood becomes transparent, and another scene is presented.

The day begins to dawn, the mist is heavy and dark; a man, dressed like a cattle merchant, is stretched dead on the side of a high-road. The trampled ground, the torn grass, prove that the victim has made a desperate resistance. This man has five bleeding wounds on his breast. He is dead, and yet he whistles for his dogs; he calls for help, crying, "Murder! murder!" But he whistles, but he calls by the five large wounds, whose gaping mouths move like lips which speak. These five calls, the five simultaneous whistles, coming from the corpse through the mouths of its wounds, are frightful to hear. At this moment the owl moves its wings, and parodies the funeral groans of the victim, in uttering five shouts of laughter, but a laughter shrill, savage, like the laugh of madmen, and cried, "The cattle merchant of Poissy. Assassin! assassin! assassin!" Prolonged subterranean echoes repeat, at first loudly, the sinister laugh of the owl, and then it seems to die away in the bowels of the earth. At this noise two large black dogs, black as ebony, with eyes sparkling like firebrands, set on to the Maitre d'Ecole, begin to bark, and turn round—round—round him with astonishing rapidity. They almost touch him, and their bayings appear so distant that they appear to be brought on the winds of the morning. By degrees, the spectres fade away like shadows, and disappear in the livid vapour, which continually rises.

A new exhalation covers the surface of the lake of blood, and rests on its bosom. It is a sort of greenish fog, transparent, resembling, as it were, the vertical cut of a canal filled with water. At first is perceived the bed of the canal, covered with a thick mud, composed of innumerable reptiles, ordinarily imperceptible to

the eye, but which, enlarged as if seen through a microscope, assume monstrous appearances, enormous proportions, relative to their real size. It is no longer mud, it is a compact, living, crawling mass, an inextricable entanglement which swarms and increases; so crowded, so compact, that a dull and almost imperceptible undulation seems to raise the level of this mud, or, rather, bank of impure animalculæ. Above flows slowly—slowly—thick, muddy, sluggish water, which bears along, in its dull course, the filth incessantly vomited from the gutters of a large city; fragments of all sorts—bodies of animals. Suddenly the Maître d'Ecole hears the noise of a body which falls in the water heavily. The spray from the disturbed water wets his face. Through a mass of watery bubbles, which covers the surface of the canal, he sees a woman sinking rapidly; she struggles—she struggles in vain, and he sees himself, and La Chouette, running precipitately from the banks of the canal of St. Martin, carrying a box covered with black cloth. After this first immersion, he sees the woman reappear on the surface of the water, waving her arms, like some one not knowing how to swim endeavouring in vain to save themselves. Then he hears a great cry. This extreme, desperate cry finishes with the dull, gurgling sound of a drowning person, and the woman sinks, for a second time, beneath the water. The owl, which flits though stationary, mocks the convulsive shriek of the drowning person, just as she mocked the groans of the cattle merchant. In the midst of the shouts of mournful laughter, the owl repeats, "*Glow! glow! glow!*" The subterranean echoes re-echo these cries. Submerged a second time, the woman suffocates, and makes a violent movement for breath; but instead of air, it is water she respires. Then her head falls backward her face becomes blue and bloated, her neck livid and inflated, her arms become stiff, and, in a last convulsion, the agonized sufferer moves her feet, which repose on the mud. She is then surrounded with a mass of black filth, which mounts with her to the surface of the water. Hardly has she drawn her last breath, than she is already covered with a myriad of microscopical reptiles, horrible and voracious vermin of the mud.

The body floats for a moment, then descends slowly, horizontally, the feet a little lower than the head, and begins to follow the current of the canal. Sometimes the corpse turns itself, and faces the Maître d'Ecole; then the spectre looks at him fixedly with two glassy opaque eyes—its violet lips move.

The Maître d'Ecole is some distance from the drowned woman, and yet she whispers in his ears, *glow—glow—glow*, accompanying these singular words with a noise like an empty bottle filling with water. The owl repeats, *glow—glow—glow*, flapping its wings, and cries,

"The woman of the Canal Saint Martin, assassin! assassin!"

The echoes reply; but instead of being lost in the bowels of the earth, they became louder and louder, and seem to draw near. This vision disappears.

The lake of blood, through which the Maître d'Ecole always sees Rodolphe, becomes of a bronzed black, then it turns red, and changes

into a liquid furnace, like melted lead; then this lake of fire ascends, mounts—mounts towards the sky like an immense water-spout.

Soon it is a horizon flaming like iron heated to a white heat. This immense sky dazzles and burns at the same time the eyesight of the Maître d'Ecole; nailed to his place, he cannot turn away his face. Then on the bottom of this burning lava he sees pass slowly, one by one, the black and gigantic ghosts of his victims.

The magic lantern of remorse! of remorse! of remorse! cries the owl, flapping its wings and shouting with laughter. Notwithstanding the intolerable pain which this incessant contemplation causes him, the Maître d'Ecole has his eyes intently fixed on the spectres which move in this inflamed vision. Then he experienced something frightful.

Passing through all the degrees of a torture without name, and from regarding so fixedly this terrible scene, he feels his eye-balls become hot, burning, dissolving, calcined in their cavities, as if they were in sockets of red-hot iron. But now, suddenly, his intolerable anguish is appeased, as if by enchantment. An aromatic breeze, of delicious freshness, has passed over his still burning orbits. This breeze is a delightful mixture of those spring perfumes which the meadow-flowers exhale when wet with morning dew. The Maître d'Ecole hears around him a slight noise like that of a gentle wind playing among the foliage, like that of living water gushing and murmuring in its rocky and mossy bed. Thousands of birds warble, from time to time, the most delicious melodies; when they cease, infantine voices of angelic purity chant strange, unknown words, winged words, thus to speak, which the Maître d'Ecole hears mounting to the skies, shuddering. A sentiment of moral happiness, of indefinable languor and calmness, by degrees takes possession of him. Cheerfulness, rapturous enjoyment, a radiation of soul, of which no physical impression, however joyous, can give any idea! The Maître d'Ecole feels himself to be floating gently in a luminous ethereal sphere; it seems to him that he is raised to an immeasurable distance above all things human.

After having enjoyed for some moments this felicity without name, he again finds himself in the gloomy abyss of his habitual thoughts. He dreams always, but he is no longer the muzzled brigand who blasphemes and curses himself in his fits of impotent rage.

A voice resounds, sonorous and solemn. It is the voice of Rodolphe. The Maître d'Ecole, alarmed, trembles; he has vaguely the consciousness of dreaming, but the terror which Rodolphe inspires is so great, that he makes, but in vain, every effort to escape this new vision. The voice speaks—he listens.

Rodolphe's manner is not harsh; it is sad and compassionate.

"Poor wretch," said he, "the hour of repentance has not yet sounded for you. God alone knows when it will. The punishment of your crimes is still incomplete. You have suffered, you have as yet made no expiation; destiny pursues its work of stern justice. Your accomplices have become your tormentors; a woman, a child rule you, torture you. In in-

dicting a punishment terrible as your crimes, I said to you—recall my words: 'You have criminally abused your strength; I will paralyze it. The strongest, the most ferocious have trembled before you; you shall tremble before the most weak.'

"You have left the obscure retreat, where you could have lived for repentance and expiation. You have been afraid of silence and solitude. Just now you envied, for a moment, the peaceful life of the labourers of this farm—but it was too late—too late! Almost without defence, you throw yourself among assassins and murderers; you wished to forget all by new crimes. You have defied those who wished to take it out of your power to injure your fellow-creatures, and this defiance has been in vain. Notwithstanding your audacity, notwithstanding your wickedness, notwithstanding your strength, you are chained. The thirst for crime chokes you; you cannot satisfy it. A few moments since you wished to kill your wife; she is there, under the same roof as yourself; she sleeps without defence; you have a knife, her chamber is a few steps off; no obstacle prevents your reaching her; nothing protects her from your fury—nothing but your impotence.

"The dream just passed, that which you now dream, may be a great lesson—they may save you. The mysterious imagery of this dream has a profound meaning.

"The lake of blood in which have appeared your victims, is the blood which you have shed; the burning lava, which replaced it, is the consuming remorse which you should have felt, so that some day, God taking pity on your long sufferings, would call you to himself, and cause you to taste the ineffable joys of forgiveness. But it shall not be thus. No! no! these warnings shall be useless—far from repenting, you will regret each day, with horrible blasphemies, the day you committed these crimes. Alas! from this continual struggle between your sanguinary desires, and the impossibility to satisfy them, between your habits of ferocious oppression and the necessity of submitting to beings as weak as they are cruel, it will result for you in a fate so frightful—so horrible!—oh! poor wretch!" And the voice of Rodolphe faltered.

For a moment he was silent, as if emotion and horror had prevented him from proceeding.

The Maitre d'Ecole felt his hair raise on his head. What, then, was this fate, which even his executioner pitied?

"The lot which awaits you is so frightful," continued Rodolphe, "that God in his inexorable and all-powerful vengeance, would wish you alone should expiate the crimes of all men, since the punishment is so frightful. Evil! evil to you! fatality wills that you should know the chastisement that awaits you, and she wills that you can do nothing to avoid it. Let the future be known to you."

It seemed to the Maitre d'Ecole that his sight was restored. He opened his eyes—he saw.

But what he saw struck him with such horror, that he uttered a piercing cry, and starting, awoke from this horrible dream.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LETTER.

NINE o'clock was striking as Madame Georges entered softly into the chamber of Fleur de Marie. The sleep of the young girl was so light that she awoke immediately. A brilliant winter's sun shone gayly through the blinds and curtains of Persian chints, lined with rose-coloured muslin, spreading a vermilion tint throughout the chamber of La Goualeuse, and giving to her pale and charming face the colour which it wanted. "Well! my child," said Madame Georges, seating herself on the bed of the young girl, and kissing her forehead, "how do you find yourself?" "Better, madame, I thank you." "You have not been awakened early this morning?" "No, madame." "So much the better. This unfortunate blind man and his son, to whom we gave a lodging last night, would leave the farm at daybreak; I feared that the noise they made in opening the doors might awaken you."

"Poor people! why did they go so soon?"

"I do not know. Last evening, when you were quiet, I went down to the kitchen to see them; but they had found themselves so much fatigued they had asked permission to retire. The Père Chatelain told me that the blind man did not appear to be in his right senses; and all our people were struck with the touching attention paid him by his son. But, tell me, you have had some fever; I do not wish you should expose yourself to the cold to-day; you must not go out of the room."

"Madame, pardon me; I must go to-night at five o'clock to the parsonage; M. le Curé expects me."

"That would be imprudent; you have passed a bad night; I am sure of it: your eyes are heavy, you have slept badly."

"It is true. I have again had frightful dreams. I saw in my sleep the woman who ill treated me when I was a child. I started from my slumbers, alarmed; it is a ridiculous weakness of which I am ashamed."

"And this weakness afflicts me, since it makes you suffer, poor child!" said Madame Georges, with tender interest, seeing the eyes of the Goualeuse filled with tears; throwing herself on the neck of her adopted mother, she concealed her face in her bosom.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter, Marie? you frighten me!"

"You are so kind to me, madame, that I reproach myself for not having confided to you what I have confided to the curé; to-morrow he will tell you himself; it will cost me too much to repeat to you this confession." "Come, come, child, be reasonable; I am sure that there is more to praise than blame in this great secret that you have told to our good abbé. Do not weep so much, you afflict me." "Pardon, madame, but, I cannot tell why, for two days past my heart sinks within me. Tears come into my eyes unbidden. I have gloomy presentiments. It seems to me some great calamity is about to overtake me." "Marie, Marie, I will scold if you allow yourself thus to be affected by imaginary terrors. Have we not real troubles enough to afflict us?"

"You are right, madame, I am wrong; I will try to overcome this weakness. If you knew,

mon Dieu ! how much I reproach myself for not being always gay, smiling, happy, as I ought to be ; alas ! my sadness must appear to you like ingratitude !”

Madame Georges was endeavouring to console the Goualeuse, when Claudine entered, after having knocked at the door.

“What do you want, Claudine ?” “Madame Pierre has arrived from Arnouville in the cabriolet of Madame Dubreuil ; he brings this letter for you ; he says it is very urgent.”

Madame Georges read aloud as follows :

“My dear Madame Georges—You will render me a great service ; and you will relieve me from great embarrassment, by coming quickly to the farm. Pierre will drive you over, and will take you back after dinner. I do not really know what to do ; M. Dubreuil is at Portoise about the sale of his wood ; I have recourse, then, to you and Marie. Clara embraces her dear little sister, and awaits her with impatience. Try to come at eleven o'clock, to breakfast. Your sincere friend,

“FEMME DUBREUIL.”

“What can be the matter !” said Madame Georges to Fleur de Marie. “Happily, the tone of the letter proves that it is nothing very serious.” “Shall I accompany you, madame ?” asked the Goualeuse.

“Perhaps it is not very prudent, for it is very cold. But, after all, it may be of service to you ; you can wrap yourself up well.”

“But, madame,” said the Goualeuse, reflecting, “M. le Curé expects me at the parsonage this evening at five o'clock.”

“You are right ; we will return before that time, I promise you.”

“Oh ! thank you, madame ; I shall be so happy to see Mademoiselle Clara.”

“Again,” said Madame Georges, in a tone of mild reproach, “Mademoiselle Clara ! Does she say Mademoiselle Marie in speaking of you ?” “No, madame,” answered La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes. “It is I who—”

“You ! you are a cruel child, who only thinks of tormenting yourself ; you forget already the promises you made me just now. Dress yourself quickly and warmly. We can arrive before eleven o'clock at Arnouville.” Then going out with Claudine, Madame Georges said, “Let Pierre wait a moment ; we will soon be ready.”

CHAPTER XII.

RECOGNITION.

HALF an hour after this conversation, Madame Georges and Fleur de Marie got into one of those large cabriolets so much used by the farmers in the environs of Paris ; this carriage, drawn by a vigorous horse, and driven by Pierre, soon rolled over the smooth road which led from Bouqueval to Arnouville. The vast buildings and numerous dependencies of this farm bore witness of the importance of this magnificent property, which Mademoiselle Césarine de Noirmont had brought in marriage to M. le Duc de Lucenay.

The cracking of Pierre's whip notified Madame Dubreuil of the arrival of Fleur de Marie and Madame Georges. On descending from

the carriage, they were joyously received by the fermière and her daughter.

Madame Dubreuil was about fifty years of age ; her expression mild and affable ; the features of her daughter, a pretty brunette, with blue eyes and rosy cheeks, impressed one with goodness and candour.

To her great astonishment, when Clara sprung to her neck, the Goualeuse saw that her friend was dressed like a peasant girl instead of being attired as a young lady. “How, you also, Clara, you disguised as a country girl !” said Madame Georges, embracing the young girl, “Must she not imitate her sister Marie in everything !” said Madame Dubreuil.

“She has had no peace until she also had her cloth jacket and her woollen petticoat, just like your Marie. But no matter, Madame Georges,” said Madame Dubreuil, sighing ; “come, and let me tell you all my troubles.”

On arriving in the saloon, with her mother and Madame Georges, Clara seated herself alongside of Fleur de Marie, gave her the best place by the fire, showed her a thousand attentions, took her hands in hers to assure herself they were not cold, embraced her again and again, calling her her wicked little sister, for waiting so long before she came to see her. If the reader will recollect the conversation between the Goualeuse and the curé, he will comprehend that she received these caresses with a mixture of humility, happiness, and fear. “And what has happened, then, my dear Madame Dubreuil,” said Madame Georges, “and how can I be of service to you !” “Mon Dieu ! in many ways. I will explain this to you. You do not know, I believe, that this farm belongs, in her own right, to Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay. It is to her direct that we make our accounts, without having anything to do with the duke's intendant.” “In effect, I was ignorant of this.” “You will see why I tell you now. It is, then, to Madame La Duchesse, or to Madame Simon, her first femme de chambre, that we pay our rents. Madame la Duchesse is so kind, so good, although a little quick, that it is a real pleasure to have anything to do with her ; Dubreuil and I would go through fire to serve her. Marry ! it is quite reasonable : I knew her when she was a little girl, when she came here with her father, the late Prince de Noirmont. Lately she asked us for six months' rent in advance. Forty thousand francs, that is not to be picked up in the road, as they say ; but we had this sum in reserve, the ‘dot’ of our Clara, and the next day Madame la Duchesse had her money in fine golden louis. These great ladies have need of so many luxuries ! And yet it is only within a year that madame has been at all exact in taking up her rents ; formerly she appeared never to be in want of money. But now it is very different.”

“As yet, my dear Madame Dubreuil, I cannot yet see how I can be of service to you.” “Stop, stop ! you'll see ; I tell you all this to show you what confidence the duchess has in us, without saying a word about her being the god-mother of Clara, whom she is very fond of. Last night, then, I received by express this letter from Madame la Duchesse.”

“It is absolutely necessary, my dear Madame Dubreuil, that the little pavilion in the orna-

should be in a state to be occupied the day after to-morrow; have everything carried there, carpets, curtains, etc., etc. In fine, let nothing be wanting, and make it as 'comfortable' as you can."

"Comfortable! you understand, Madame Georges; it is underlined, moreover!" said Madame Dubreuil, looking at her friend with an air at once embarrassed and meditative; then she continued: "Make a fire night and day in the pavilion, to drive away the dampness, for it is a long time since it has been occupied. You will treat the person who will come to stay there as you would treat me; a letter which this person will hand you, will inform you what I expect from your zeal, always so obliging. I count on you once more, without fear of your failing; I know how kind you are, and I know your fidelity. Adieu, my dear Madame Dubreuil. Embrace my pretty god-daughter, and believe in my affectionate regard."

"NOIRMONT DE LUCENAY."

"P.S.—The person who is to occupy the pavilion will arrive the day after to-morrow, in the evening. Above all, do not forget, I beg you, to make the pavilion as *comfortable* as possible."

"Do you see! again this devil of a word underlined!" said Madame Dubreuil, putting in her pocket the letter of the Duchesse de Lucenay. "Well! nothing can be plainer," answered Madame Georges.

"How, nothing plainer?" "You have not understood then! Madame la Duchesse wishes, above all, that the pavilion shall be as *comfortable* as possible." "It was for this I have sent for you. Clara and I have almost killed ourselves in thinking what this word meant, and we can't find out. Yes, Clara has been to boarding-school at Villiers le Bel, and has gained I don't know how many prizes in geography and history. Well! what use is it? she is no farther advanced than I am on the subject of this odd word; it must be some word used at court or in the fashionable world. But, never mind, you can easily imagine our embarrassment: Madame la Duchesse wishes, above all, that the pavilion should be comfortable; she underlines the word, she repeats it twice, and we can't find out what she means!" "Dieu Merciel! I can explain to you this great mystery," said Madame Georges, smiling. "*Comfortable*, on this occasion, means a commodious room, well arranged, well enclosed, warm, in fine, where nothing is wanted that is necessary and even superfluous."

"Ah, mon Dieu! I understand, but, then, I am much embarrassed!" "How is that?"

"Madame la Duchesse speaks of carpets, furniture, and many other et cetera; but we have no carpets here, our furniture is very common, and, besides, I do not know whether the person we expect is a lady or gentleman, and all this must be ready by to-morrow night. What shall I do! what shall I do! here there are no resources. Truly, Madame Georges, it almost drives me wild!"

"But, mamma," said Clara, "if you take the furniture of my chamber while you are getting new furniture, I will go and pass two or three days with Marie at Bouqueval!" "Your chamber! your chamber, my child; do you think it is good enough?" said Madame Dubreuil, shrug-

ging her shoulders; "is it enough—enough *comfortable*! as Madame la Duchesse says. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! where do they find such words!"

"This pavilion is, then, ordinarily uninhabited!" asked Madame Georges. "Without doubt, it is the little white building which stands all alone at the end of the orchard. M. le Prince built it for Madame la Duchesse when she was a child: when she came to the farm with her father, she always rested there. It has three pretty rooms, and at the end of the garden a Swiss dairy, where Madame la Duchesse amused herself to play milkwoman: since her marriage, we have seen her at the farm but twice, and each time she passed some hours in the little pavilion. The first time—it is about six years ago—she came on horseback with—"

Then, as if the presence of Fleur de Marie and Clara hindered her from saying more, Madame Dubreuil said,

"But I talk, I talk; yet all this does not relieve me from my troubles. Come, then, to my assistance, my poor Madame Georges; come, then, to my assistance!"

"Let us see, now, what there is in the pavilion at present!" "Not much; in the principal room, a straw mat on the floor, a rush-bottomed sofa, arm-chairs of the same, a table, some chairs, and that's all. From this to being *comfortable* there is a long distance, you see." "Were I in your place, this is what I would do: it is eleven o'clock; I would send to Paris an intelligent man."

"Our superintendent; he has no superior."

"Very well; in two hours at the farthest he can be in Paris: he must go to an upholsterer in the Chaussée de Antin, no matter whom; he will give him a list that I will make for you, after having seen the pavilion, and he will say that, cost what it may—" "Oh! certainly; as long as Madame la Duchesse is content, I shall regard nothing." "He will say to him, then, that, cost what it may, all that is noted on this list must be here this night, and also three or four workmen to arrange everything."

"They can come by the Gonesse coach, which leaves Paris at eight o'clock in the evening." "And as there is nothing to do but to transport furniture, nail down carpets, and hang curtains, all can be easily ready by to-morrow evening."

"Ah! my good Madame Georges, from what embarrassment you save me! I would never have thought of this. You are my providence; and now you will have the goodness to make me the list I want, so that the pavilion shall be—"

"Comfortable! yes, certainly."

"Ah! mon Dieu! another difficulty! we don't know whether it is a gentleman or lady we are to expect. In her letter, Madame la Duchesse said a person: it is very perplexing!"

"Act as if you expected a lady, my dear Madame Dubreuil; if it is a man, he will like it all the better." "You are right; always right." A servant came and announced that the breakfast was ready. "We will breakfast directly," said Madame Georges; "but, while I write the list of what is necessary, have the three rooms measured, the height, length, and breadth, for

the curtains and carpets." "Well, well! I'll go and tell all this to the superintendent."

"Madame," said the servant, "there is also there this milkwoman of Stains: her furniture is in a little cart drawn by an ass!" "Marry, it is not very heavy, her furniture!"

"Poor woman!" said Madame Dubreuil, with interest.

"Who is this woman?" asked Madame Georges.

"A peasant of Stains, who had four cows, and who made a living by selling her milk every morning in Paris. Her husband was a farrier. One day, having need of some iron, he accompanied his wife, agreeing to meet her on his return home at the corner of the street where she usually sold her milk. Unfortunately, this was in a horrible part of the city: when her husband returned, he found her quarrelling with some drunken wretches who had overturned her milk into the gutter. The blacksmith tried to make them understand reason; they maltreated him; he defended himself, and in the scuffle he received a blow with a knife, which stretched him dead on the ground." "Ah! how dreadful!" cried Madame Georges; "and did they arrest the assassin?"

"Unfortunately, no; in the tumult he escaped. The poor widow assures me that she can easily recognise him, for she has seen him several times with some of his comrades in that part of the town; but so far all researches have been useless to discover the assassin. In short, since the death of her husband she has been obliged to sell her cows, and a little land that she had to pay her debts. The farmer of the chateau of Stains recommended her to me as an excellent creature, as honest as unfortunate; for she has three children, the eldest of which is not more than twelve years; I happened to have a place vacant; I have given it to her, and she has now come to remain with us." "This goodness on your part does not surprise me, my good Madame Dubreuil." "Tell me, Clara," continued the fermière, "do you wish to go and show this good woman her room, while I go and tell the superintendent to get ready to go to Paris!" "Yes, mamma; Marie, come with me." "Doubtless; could one go without the other?" said the fermière. "And I," added Madame Georges, seating herself before a table, "I'll commence my list, so as not to lose any time, for we must be back at Bouqueval by four o'clock."

"At four o'clock! you are in a great hurry," said Madame Dubreuil. "Yes, Marie must be at the personage by five o'clock." "Oh! if it is an engagement with our good Abbé Laporte, it is sacred," said Madame Dubreuil. "I will write the orders in consequence—these two children have so much to say—we must give them time to talk." "We will go, then, at three o'clock, my dear Madame Dubreuil."

"It is understood. But I must thank you once more! what a happy idea it was to send for you," said Madame Dubreuil. "Go, Clara; go, Marie!" While Madame Georges wrote, Madame Dubreuil went in one direction, and the two young girls another with the servant who had announced the arrival of the milkwoman from Stains. "Where is this poor woman?" asked Clara. "She is with her chil-

dren, her little cart and donkey, in the barn-yard, mademoiselle."

"You shall see her, Marie—the poor woman," said Clara, taking the arm of La Goualeuse; "how pale she is, and how sad she looks in her widow's mourning. The last time she came to see mamma she quite overcame me; she wept bitterly in speaking of her husband; and then, suddenly drying her tears, she burst out in a rage against his murderer. Then—she made me afraid, she looked so wicked; but, truly, her feelings are natural! the unfortunate! How many unfortunate people there are; eh! Marie!"

"Yes, yes, unquestionably," answered La Goualeuse, sighing, "there are many unhappy people; you are right, mademoiselle."

"Come, come!" cried Clara, stamping her feet; "now see, once more you have said you,* and you call me mademoiselle. Are you angry with me, Marie?" "Il grand Dieu!" "Well, then, why do you say you? You know my mother and Madame Georges have already scolded you for that. I warn you, I'll make them scold you still more; so much the worse for you!" "Clara, pardon me; I was not thinking."

"Not thinking—when you see me after eight days' separation!" said Clara, sadly. "No, no, it is not that: look here, Marie—I shall begin to think you are proud."

Fleur de Marie became pale as death, and answered not a word. At the sight of her, a woman dressed as a widow had uttered a cry of horror and anger.

This woman was the person who each morning had sold milk to the Goualeuse when she lived with the Ogresse of the tapis-franc.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MILKWOMAN.

THE scene which we are about to describe took place in one of the courts of the farm, in presence of the labourers and women, who had just returned from work to take their midday repast.

Under a shed was to be seen a little cart drawn by an ass, and containing the rustic furniture of the widow; a little boy of twelve years of age, aided by two children still younger, had commenced to unload this vehicle. The milkwoman was about forty years of age, with a rough, hard-visaged countenance, whose eyes were red from recent weeping. On perceiving Fleur de Marie, at first she uttered a piercing scream; but soon grief, anger, indignation contracted her features; she threw herself on the Goualeuse, took her brutally by the arm, and, showing her to the people of the farm, cried, "Here is a wretch who knows the assassin of my husband. I have seen her speak twenty times to this brigand! When I sold milk at the corner of the Rue de la Vieille Draperie, she came to buy a sou's worth every morning; she ought to know who the scoundrel is who gave the blow: like all her fellows, she belongs to this clique of bandits. Oh! you shall not escape me, hussy as you are!" cried the exasperated milkwoman, and she seized the

* Thou is always used among intimate friends.

other arm of Fleur de Marie, who, trembling, lost, wished to fly. Clara, stupefied at this sudden attack, had not been able to say a word; but, at this renewed violence, she cried, "But are you mad! grief has taken away your senses! you are mistaken!" "I mistaken!" answered the woman, bitterly. "Oh! no, no! I am not mistaken. Look, look! how pale she is—the wretch! how her teeth chatter! Justice shall force her to speak; you shall come with me to the mayor, do you hear! Oh! you need not resist. I will hold you—I will carry you sooner!" "Insolent that you are!" cried Clara, much exasperated; "go away from here—to treat my friend thus—my sister!" "Your sister—mademoiselle, go away! it is you who are mad!" answered the widow, roughly: "your sister! a girl from the streets, who for six months I have seen in the cité!" At these words the labourers began to murmur against Fleur de Marie; they naturally took the part of the milkwoman, who was of their class, and whose misfortunes interested them.

The three children, hearing their mother raise her voice, ran to her and clung round her weeping, without knowing what was the matter. The appearance of these poor little things, also dressed in mourning, increased the sympathy that the widow inspired, and augmented the indignation of the peasants against Fleur de Marie.

Clara, frightened at these almost menacing demonstrations, said to the people of the farm, in a trembling voice, "Make this woman go away from here; I repeat to you that sorrow makes her crazy. Marie, Marie, pardeu! Mon Dieu, this mad woman knows not what she says." The Goualeuse, pale, trembling, with her head down to escape all looks, remained silent, annihilated, helpless, and made no movement to escape from the rough grasp of the milkwoman. Clara, attributing this to the fright caused by this scene, said again to the labourers, "Do you not hear me, then? I order you to drive this woman away. Since she persists in her conduct, to punish her insolence, she shall not have the place my mother promised her; she shall never put her foot on this farm again." Not a single labourer moved to obey the orders of Clara; one of them dared to say,

"Marry, mademoiselle, if this is a girl of the streets, and she knows the assassin of the husband of this poor woman, she will come and explain before the mayor." "I repeat that you shall never come here again," said Clara to the milkwoman, "unless you instantly ask pardon of Mlle. Marie for your rudeness." "You drive me away, mademoiselle! very well," answered the widow, with bitterness. "Come, my poor orphans," added she, embracing her children, "load the cart again; we will go and seek our bread elsewhere; the bon Dieu will have pity on us; but at least, in going, we will take with us this creature before the mayor, who will oblige her to denounce the assassin of my poor husband, since she knows the whole band! Because you are rich, mademoiselle," continued she, looking at Clara insolently, "because you have friends among such creatures as this, you must not, on that account, be so hard to poor folks!"

"It is true," said a labourer, "the milkwoman is right."

"Poor woman, she has right on her side."

"Some one has killed her husband; must she remain silent?"

"It is unjust to send her away. Is it her fault if the friend of Mlle. Clara, turns out to be a girl of the streets?"

"An honest woman should not be turned away, a mother of a family, on account of such a creature!"

And the murmurings became menacing, when Clara cried,

"God be praised! here is my mother."

Madame Dubreuil, returning from the pavilion in the orchard, crossed the court. "Well, Clara, well, Marie," said she, approaching the group; "come to breakfast; come, my children, it is already late!" "Mamma," cried Clara, "defend my sister from the insults of this woman," and she pointed to the widow; "pray send her away. If you knew what she has had the impudence to say to Marie."

"How! she has dared!" "Yes, mamma. Look, poor little sister, how she trembles; she can hardly support herself. Ah! it is a shame for us, that such a scene should take place here. Marie, pardon us, I entreat you!"

"But what does this mean?" asked Madame Dubreuil, looking around her with a troubled air, after having remarked the appearance of the Goualeuse. "Madame will be just, she will, very sure," murmured the labourers.

"Ah! here is Madame Dubreuil; it is you who will be turned out," said the widow to Fleur de Marie.

"It is then true!" cried Madame Dubreuil, to the milkwoman, who still held Fleur de Marie by the arm; "you dare thus to speak to the friend of my daughter! Is it thus you return my kindness! will you leave this young person alone?"

"I respect you, madame, and I am grateful for your kindness," said the widow, relinquishing the arm of the Goualeuse; "but before you accuse me and drive me away with my children, question this girl. She will not have the effrontery to deny that I know her, and that she knows me also." "Mon Dieu! Marie, do you hear what this woman says!" cried Madame Dubreuil, with surprise.

"Are you called, yes or no, the Goualeuse?" said the milkwoman to Marie. "Yes," said the unfortunate girl, in a low voice and cast-down manner, and without looking at Madame Dubreuil. "Yes; they called me thus." "Ah! do you see!" cried the provoked labourers; "she acknowledges it! she acknowledges it!" "She acknowledges—but what! what does she acknowledge!" cried Madame Dubreuil, half frightened at the avowal of Fleur de Marie. "Let her answer, madame," said the widow. "She will confess that she was in an infamous house of the Rue aux Fèves, in the cité, where I sold her a sous worth of milk every morning. She will confess that she has often spoken before me to the assassin of my husband. Oh! she knows him well, I am sure. A pale young man, who was always smoking, and who wore a cap, a blouse, and had long hair; she must know his name. Is it not true? Answer, wretch!" cried the milkwoman. "I may have spoken to the assassin of your husband; for there is, unfortunately, more than one murderer."

in the *cité*," said Fleur de Marie, in a voice almost extinct; "but I do not know of whom you speak." "How! what does she say?" cried Madame Dubreuil, with affright; "she has spoken to assassins!" "Creatures such as she is, only know such kind of people," answered the widow.

At first, stupefied by such a strange relation, confirmed by the last words of Fleur de Marie, Madame Dubreuil, comprehending then everything, drew back with disgust and horror, drawing violently and roughly her daughter towards her, who had approached the Goualeuse to sustain her, and cried,

"Ah! what abomination! Clara, take care. Do not approach this person. But how could Madame Georges receive her at her house? How did she dare to present her to me, and suffer my daughters—mon Dieu! mon Dieu! but this is horrible! I can hardly believe what I see! But no, Madame Georges is incapable of such indignity. She has been deceived, as we have been. If not, this is abominable on her part." Clara, much afflicted at this cruel scene, believed herself in a dream. In her youthful innocence, she did not comprehend the terrible criminations with which they loaded her friend. Her heart was broken, tears filled her eyes, on seeing the stupor of the Goualeuse, dumb, trembling as a criminal before her judges. "Come, come, my daughter," said Madame Dubreuil to Clara; then turning towards Fleur de Marie, "And you, unworthy creature, le bon Dieu will punish you for your hypocrisy. To dare to suffer that my daughter—an angel of virtue—should call you her friend—her sister! you, the refuse of what is most vile in the world! what effrontery! To dare to associate with honest people, when you deserve, without doubt, to join your fellows in prison." "Yes, yes," cried the labourers, "she must go to prison. She knows the assassin. She is perhaps his accomplice." "Do you see the hand of heaven!" said the widow, shaking her fist at the Goualeuse. "As to you, my good woman," said Madame Dubreuil, "far from sending you away, I will reward the service you have rendered me in unmasking this creature."

"Right! Our mistress is just," murmured the labourers.

"Come, Clara," continued the *fermière*, "Madame Georges must explain her conduct to us, or I will never see her again; for if she has not been deceived, her conduct towards us has been most scandalous." "But, my mother, see this poor Marie." "Let her sink with shame, if she pleases; so much the better! Despise her. I do not wish you to remain a moment with her. She is one of those creatures to whom a young girl like you cannot speak without dishonouring themselves." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mamma," said Clara, resisting the efforts of her mother to carry her off, "I do not know what all this means. Marie is perhaps culpable, since you say so; but see, see—she is fainting; have pity on her, at least." "Oh! Mademoiselle Clara, you are good—you pardon me. It is, indeed, unwillingly that I have deceived you. I have often reproached myself," said Fleur de Marie, casting on her protectress a look of ineffable gratitude. "But, my mother, have you women no pity?" cried Clara, in a touching voice.

"Pity! for her! Come, if it were not for Madame Georges, who will take her away, I would turn this wretch out of doors as a pest," answered Madame Dubreuil; and she endeavoured to lead off her daughter, who, turning towards the Goualeuse for the last time, cried, "Marie! my sister! I do not know of what they accuse you, but I am sure you are not culpable, and I love you always." "Hush, hush," said Madame Dubreuil, putting her hand over the mouth of her daughter, "hush; happily, every one present can bear witness, that after this odious revelation, you have not remained a moment with this lost girl. Is it not so, my friends?" "Yes, yes, madame," said a labourer, "we are witnesses that Mademoiselle Clara has not remained a moment with this girl, who is doubtless a thief, since she knows assassins."

Madame Dubreuil carried off Clara. The Goualeuse remained alone in the midst of the menacing group which was formed around her. Notwithstanding the reproaches with which Madame Dubreuil had overwhelmed her, her presence and that of her daughter had, in some degree, supported Fleur de Marie as to the consequences of this scene; but, after the departure of the two women, finding herself at the mercy of the peasants, her strength failed her, and she was obliged to lean against the fence for support. Nothing could be more touching than the position of this unfortunate. Nothing more threatening than the words, than the attitude of the peasants who surrounded her. With her head hanging down, her face concealed between her two hands, her neck and bosom veiled by the square ends of the red Indian kerchief which was tied round her little peasant's cap, the Goualeuse, immovable, presented the most touching picture of grief and resignation. At some distance from her, the widow of the murdered man, triumphant and still exasperated against Fleur de Marie, pointed to the young girl with gestures of hatred and contempt. The people of the farm, grouped around, did not conceal the hostile sentiments which animated them; their rough and gross countenances expressed, at once, indignation, anger, and a sort of brutal and insulting raillery; the women showed themselves the most furious, the most revolting. The touching beauty of the Goualeuse was not one of the least causes of the hatred against her.

Man nor woman could not forgive Fleur de Marie for having been, until then, treated as an equal by their masters.

And, besides, some of the labourers of Arnouville, having been unsuccessful applicants for situations at the farm of Bouqueval, felt towards Madame Georges rather unfriendly, a feeling which could be of no advantage to her protégée. The first movements of uneducated natures are always extreme—excellent or detestable.

But they become horribly dangerous when the multitude believe their brutalities authorized by the real or imaginary wrongs of those who act from motives of rage or hatred.

"We must carry her before the mayor," cried one.

"Yes, yes; and if she can't walk, we will push her."

"And to think that she dares to dress like one of us honest country-girls," added one of the ugliest women of the farm.

"With her holy, touch-me-not air," answered another, "one would have given her the sacrament without confession."

"Has she had the impudence to go to mass?"

"The brazen-face! why did she not take communion at once?"

"And she must associate with our masters, that's more."

"As if we were not good enough for her!"

"Happily, every one has their turn."

"Oh! you must speak and say who is the murderer," cried the widow. "You belong to the same band. I am not sure I did not see you that very day. Come, come, you need not sob, now you are known. Show us your face; it is fine to look at." And the widow brutally tore down the hands of the young girl, which concealed her face bathed with tears. The Goualeuse, at first overcome with shame, began to tremble with affright on finding herself at the mercy of the enraged beings; she joined her hands, turned towards the milkwoman her supplicating and tearful eyes, and said, in her sweet voice, "Mon Dieu! madame, it is two months since I retired to the farm of Bouqueval. I was not then a witness of the misfortune of which you speak; and—". The timid voice of Fleur de Marie was drowned with threatening cries. "Lead her to the mayor—let her explain."

"Come, march! my beauty."

And the menacing group drew nearer and nearer to the Goualeuse; she crossed her hands, and, looking from side to side, seemed to implore assistance.

"Oh!" said the widow, "you need not look for help; Mademoiselle Clara is no longer there to defend you; you shall not escape us."

"Alas! madame," said she, trembling, "I do not wish to escape; I only ask to answer what is demanded, since it may be of use to you. But what harm have I done to all these people who surround and threaten me?"

"You have had the impudence to associate with our masters, when we, who are a thousand times better than you are, could not do it. That's what you have done to us."

"And, besides, why did you wish to drive away from here this poor widow and her children?" said another. "It was not I, it was Mademoiselle Clara, who wished—" "Come, come, then," said another labourer, interrupting her, "you didn't even ask pardon for her; you were willing to see her bread taken away!" "No, no: she didn't ask pardon for them!" "Ain't she wicked!" "A poor widow—mother of three children!" "If I did not ask her pardon," said Fleur de Marie, "it was because I had not the strength to say a word."

"You had strength enough to speak to assassins."

Thus, as it always happens in popular movements, these peasants, more stupid than wicked, irritated, excited themselves at the sound of their own words, stirred themselves up merely from the force of their own threats and revilings, against their victim. Thus the mob hastens, often by a progressive advancement, to the accomplishment of the most ferocious and unjust acts. The threatening circle of peasants drew nearer and nearer to Fleur de Marie—all speaking at once—the widow of the blacksmith

was forgotten. Only separated from the horse-pond by the slight fence against which she was leaning, the Goualeuse was afraid of being thrown in the water, and cried, stretching forth her hands in a supplicating manner, "But, Mon Dieu! what do you wish of me? 'par pitié,' do me no harm!"

And as the milkwoman, with threatening gestures, drawing nearer and nearer, planted her fists directly in her face, Fleur de Marie cried, with affright, "I beg you, madame, do not push me so, or I'll fall into the water." These words of Fleur de Marie gave these rough people an idea of one of those jokes, which often leave the victim half dead on the spot: one of the most furious cried, "A ducking! let us give her a ducking!"

"Yes, yes—to the water! the water!" was repeated with a burst of laughter and frantic applause. "That's it—a good ducking! it won't kill her." "That will teach her to come and mix with honest people." "Yes, yes—to the water! to the water!" "The ice has been broken this morning on purpose." "The street-walker shall remember the good people of the farm of Arnouville!"

On hearing these inhuman cries, these barbarous jokes, seeing the exasperation of these irritated people as they advanced to seize her, Fleur de Marie thought she would have died. After the first fear succeeded a sort of bitter content: she saw the future under such black colours, that she mentally thanked Heaven for putting an end to her troubles: she did not utter another word of complaint; but, falling on her knees, crossed her arms religiously on her breast, shut her eyes, and, in prayer, awaited the result.

The labourers, surprised at the attitude and silent resignation of the Goualeuse, hesitated, for a moment, to accomplish their savage projects; but, unbribed for their weakness by the female portion of the assemblage, they began to shout to give them courage to achieve their wicked design. Two of the most outrageous were about seizing her, when a trembling, thrilling voice, cried,

"Stop!" at the same moment, Madame Georges, who had forced a passage through the midst of the crowd, stood alongside of the Goualeuse, took her in her arms, and raised her up, saying, "Stand up, my child; stand up, my dear daughter; one must kneel to God alone." The expression, the attitude of Madame Georges was so proudly courageous, that the crowd drew back, and remained silent. Indignation coloured her cheeks, ordinarily so pale. She looked at the labourers boldly, and said to them, with a loud and threatening voice, "Wretches! are you not ashamed to treat with such violence this unfortunate child!"

"She is a—" "She is my daughter!" cried Madame Georges, interrupting the labourers. "M. l'Abbé Laporte, whom every one blesses and venerates, loves her and protects her, and those he esteems ought to be respected by the whole world."

These simple words produced their effect. The curé of Bouqueval was, in the neighbourhood, regarded as a saint; many of the peasants were not ignorant of the interest he felt in the Goualeuse. Nevertheless, some mur-

mure were still heard: Madame Georges understood the reason, and cried,

"This unfortunate young girl, was she the vilest of creatures, was she abandoned by everybody, your conduct towards her would not be less odious. What do you wish to punish her for? And, besides, with what right? Where is your authority? Your strength? Is it not cowardly, disgraceful, for men to take for their victim a young girl without any defence! Come, Marie, come, my well-beloved child, let us return home; there, at least, you are known and appreciated." Madame Georges took the arm of Fleur de Marie; the labourers, ashamed of the brutality of their conduct, drew back respectfully. The widow alone advanced, and said, resolutely, "This girl shall not leave this place until she makes a deposition before the mayor, as to her knowledge of the assassin of my husband."

"My good friend," said Madame Georges, restraining herself, "my daughter has no deposition to make here: some other time, if justice finds it necessary to summon her as a witness, let it be done, and I will accompany her. Until then, no one has the right to interrogate her." "But, Madame, I tell you—" Madame Georges interrupted the milkwoman, and answered her, severely, "The misfortune of which you are a victim can hardly excuse your conduct: some day you will regret the violence that you have so cruelly excited. Mademoiselle Marie lives with me at the farm of Bouqueval; inform the judge who has received your first declarations; we will await his orders."

The widow could make no reply to these wise words; she seated herself on the ground, and began to weep bitterly, embracing her children. Some moments after this scene, Pierre brought the cabriolet: Madame Georges and Marie got into the carriage to return to Bouqueval. On passing before the house, the Goualeuse saw Clara: she was weeping, half concealed behind the persienne, but with her handkerchief she waved an adieu to Fleur de Marie.

CHAPTER XIV.

CONSOLATIONS.

"Ah! madame, what shame for me! what shame for you!" said Fleur de Marie to her adopted mother, when she found herself alone with her in the little saloon of Bouqueval. "You are doubtless angry at Madame Dubreuil, and this on my account. Oh! my presentiments! God has thus punished me for having deceived this lady and her daughter. I am the subject of discord between you and your friend." "My friend is an excellent woman, my dear child, but a poor weak head. Besides, as she has a good heart, to-morrow she will regret, I am sure, her foolish conduct of to-day." "Alas! madame, do not believe I wish to justify her by accusing you; mon Dieu! but your kindness for me has made you blind. Put yourself in the place of Madame Dubreuil—learn that the companion of your cherished daughter—was—what I was—say, can any one blame her maternal indignation?"

Madame Georges could not find a word to answer to this question of Fleur de Marie, who went on:

"This scene which I have undergone, to-morrow will be known to the whole country! It is not for myself that I feel; but who knows now if the reputation of Clara will not be forever stained, because she called me her sister, friend. I should have followed my first resolution—to have resisted the feeling which drew me towards Mademoiselle Dubreuil—and, even at the risk of inspiring her with aversion, withdrawn from the friendship she offered me. But I have forgotten the distance that separated us. Thus, you see, I am punished, ah! cruelly punished, for I have, perhaps, caused an irreparable wrong to this young person, so virtuous and so good."

"My dear child," said Madame Georges, after some moments' reflection, "you are wrong to reproach yourself so much; your past life has been culpable, but is it nothing, by your repentance, to have merited the protection of our venerable curé? Is it not under his auspices, under mine, that you have been presented to Madame Dubreuil? Yourself alone inspired her with the attachment she has so liberally shown you! Did she not ask you herself to call Clara sister? And, besides, as I told her just now, far I ought not and wish not to conceal anything from you, could I, certain as I was of your repentance, noise abroad the past, and thus render your situation more painful? impossible! perhaps in making you despair, in delivering you to the scorn of people who, as unfortunate, as forsaken as you have been, would not, like you, preserve the secret instinct of honour and virtue? The revelations of this woman are to be deplored—fatal; but should I, on foreseeing it, have sacrificed your future repose to an eventuality almost improbable?"

"Ah! madame, that which proves how much my position is forever false and miserable, is, that from affection for me you have had reason to conceal the past, and that the mother of Clara had also reason to despise me on account of this past; to despise me, as everybody will despise me hereafter; for the scene at the farm of Arnouville will be spread everywhere—everything will be known. Oh! I shall die with shame! I never can look at any one again!" "Not even at me? Poor child!" said Madame Georges, bathed in tears, and opening her arms to Fleur de Marie; "and yet you will move in my heart but the tenderness, the devotion of a mother. Courage, then, Marie! have the consciousness of your repentance. You are here surrounded with friends; well, this house shall be the world for you; we will meet these revelations you fear so much. Our good abbé will call together the people of the farm, who already love you so much; he will tell them the truth of the past. Believe me, my child, his word has such authority that this revelation will render you more interesting still." "I believe you, madame, and I will be resigned. Yesterday, in our conversation, M. le Curé spoke to me of sorrowful expiations: they have commenced—I ought not to be astonished. He told me, besides, that my sufferings would be some day counted for me. Sustained in these trials by you and by him, I will not complain." "You will go to see him in a few

moments; never will his counsels be more needed or salutary. It is now half past four: get ready to go to the parsonage, my child. I am going to write to M. Reddôphe what has occurred at Arnouville. I will send my letter by express; then I will join you at the abbé's, for it is important that we should confer together."

A few moments afterward the Goualeuse set out for the parsonage by the hollow road, where, the evening previous, the Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard had agreed to join La Chouette.

CHAPTER XV.

REFLECTIONS.

Thus, as has been seen from her conversations with Madame Georges, and with the Curé of Bouqueval, Fleur de Marie had so nobly profited by the counsels of her benefactors, had so completely imbibed, as it were, their principles, that the more she dwelt on her past objections, the more she despaired. Still more unfortunately, her mind became developed as her excellent natural impulses increased and flourished in the midst of the atmosphere and honour in which she lived. With a mind less elevated, a sensibility less exquisite, an imagination less lively, Fleur de Marie would have been easily consoled. She had repented—a venerable priest had pardoned her; she would have forgotten the horrors of the city in the midst of the calm repose of the rustic life that she partook with Madame Georges: at length she gave herself up without fear to the friendship offered to her by Mademoiselle Dubreuil; and that, not from a disregard of the faults she had committed, but from a blind confidence in the words of those whose excellence she was conscious of. They said to her, "Now your conduct renders you the equal of honest people;" she could see no difference between herself and honest people. The unfortunate scene at the farm of Arnouville had painfully affected her; but she could not, so to speak, have foreseen this occurrence, in shedding bitter tears, experiencing a lively remorse, at sight of Clara sleeping innocently and softly in the chamber of the former boarder of the Ogresse.

Poor girl! had she not often applied to herself in the silence of her long, sleepless nights, criminations much more poignant than those with which the inhabitants of the farm had overwhelmed her! That which was killing Fleur de Marie slowly, was the analysis, the incessant examination into that with which she reproached herself; it was, above all, the constant comparison of the future which the inexorable past had imposed on her, with that future of which she might have dreamed except for this.

The spirit of analysis, of examination and comparison, is almost always inherent in a superior mind. Among proud and haughty beings, this spirit produces doubt and disgust towards others. In timid and shrinking minds, this spirit leads to doubt and suspicion against one's self. The first are condemned—they acquit themselves. The second are acquitted—they condemn themselves. The Curé of

Bouqueval, notwithstanding his sanctity, Madame Georges, notwithstanding her virtues, or, rather, both of them by reason of their virtues and their sanctity, could not imagine what the Goualeuse suffered, since her mind, freed from its stains, could contemplate all the depths of the abyss in which she had been plunged. They did not know that the fearful "souvenirs" of the Goualeuse had almost the power, the strength of reality; they did not know that this young girl, of an exquisite sensibility, of a poetic and thoughtful imagination, of a quickness of impressions, much to be lamented for this susceptibility; they did not know that this young girl passed not a single day without recalling, without almost feeling with sufferings mingled with fear and disgust, the disgraceful miseries of her former mode of life. Let one imagine a young girl of sixteen years, pure and virtuous, having the consciousness of this purity, cast, by some infernal power, into the infamous tavern of the Ogresse, and insuperably subjected to the domination of this wretch! Such was for the Fleur de Marie the reaction of the past on the present. Can we thus comprehend this kind of retrospective feeling, or, rather, this moral "contre-coup," from which the Goualeuse suffered so cruelly, that she regretted oftener than she had dared to avow to the abbé, that she had not died as she had lived!

From the little experience in life, and the few reflections that are generally made on it, what we are about to say must not be taken for a paradox. That which rendered Fleur de Marie worthy of interest and pity is, that not only had she never loved, but her senses had always remained dormant and frozen.

The "naïves" confidence of Clara Dubreuil, on the subject of her love for the young farmer whom she was about to marry, had wounded the heart of Fleur de Marie; she also felt that she could have loved tenderly, that she could have loved in every sense, in all that was devoted, noble, pure, and great; and yet this was not to be permitted to her, either to inspire or experience. For, if she loved, she would choose by the standard of her own mind, and the more the choice would be worthy of her, the more she must feel herself unworthy.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MEETING.

THE sun was sinking in the west, the plain was silent, deserted. Fleur de Marie approached the entrance of the hollow road, which must be crossed before she could reach the parsonage, when she saw a little lame boy, with a blue cap, come out of the ravine; he seemed to be weeping, and as he perceived the Goualeuse in the distance, he ran towards her. "Oh! my good lady, have pity on me if you please," cried he, joining his hands in a supplicating manner. "What do you want? what is the matter, my child?" asked the Goualeuse, with interest. "Alas! my good lady, my poor grandmother, who is very old, very old, has fallen there, in descending the ravine; she has hurt herself very much. I am afraid she has broken her leg. I

am too weak to help her up. Mon Dieu! what shall I do if you don't come and help me? Poor grandmother! perhaps she will die." The Goualeuse, touched with the grief of the little lame boy, cried, "I am not very strong, either, my child, but I can, perhaps, help you to assist your grandmother. Let us go quickly to her. I live at the farm yonder. If the poor old woman can't walk there with us, I will send for—"

"Oh! my good lady, the bon Dieu will bless you, surely. It is this way—two steps—in the hollow road. As I said, it is in going down the bank she has fallen." "You don't belong, then, to this part of the country?" asked the Goualeuse, following Tortillard, whom the reader has doubtless recognised. "No, my good lady, we come from Ecouen." "And where are you going to?" "To a good curé, who lives on the hill, there," said the son of Bras-Rouge, to augment the confidence of Fleur de Marie.

"To the Abbé Laporte's, perhaps?" "Yes, my good lady, to the Abbé Laporte's; my poor grandmother knows him very well—very well."

"I am just going to see him," said Fleur de Marie, going down lower and lower into the hollow road.

"Grandma! here I am, here I am! be patient. I bring you some help," cried Tortillard, to inform the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette to hold themselves in readiness to seize their victim. "Your grandmother has not fallen thus far from here?" asked the Goualeuse. "No, my good lady; behind that large tree, where the road turns, at twenty steps from here." All at once Tortillard stopped. The noise of the gallop of a horse resounded quite near. "Once more all is lost!" said Tortillard to himself. The road made a turn at a short distance from the place where the son of Bras-Rouge was standing with the Goualeuse. A horseman appeared at this turn; when he came up to them he stopped. Then was heard the trot of another horse, and some moments after came a servant dressed in a brown riding-coat, with silver buttons, white leather breeches, and top boots. A narrow belt of yellow leather confined behind his saddle the Mackintosh of his master.

The master, dressed plainly in a thick, bronze-colour riding-coat and light-gray trousers, rode with perfect grace a bay horse, of pure blood and singular beauty. The horse of the groom, who stood in waiting at some steps from his master, was also of full blood and breeding. In this horseman with a dark and charming face, Tortillard recognised M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy, who was generally reputed to be the "amant" of Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay. "My pretty girl," said the viscount to the Goualeuse, whose beauty struck him, "will you have the kindness to show me the road to the village of Arnouville?"

Marie, casting down her eyes before the bold stare of the young man, answered, "As you go out of the hollow road, monsieur, you will take the first path to the right; this will conduct you to an avenue of cherry-trees, which leads directly to Arnouville." "A thousand thanks, my pretty child. You direct me much better than an old woman that I found two steps from here, stretched at the foot of a tree; I could get nothing from her but groans." "My poor grandmother," murmured Tortillard, in a sorrowful

tone. "And now another word," added M. de Saint Rémy, addressing the Goualeuse; "can you tell me if I can easily find at Arnouville the farm of M. Dubreuil?"

The Goualeuse could not prevent herself from trembling at these words, which recalled to her the painful scene of the morning; she answered, "The farm buildings border on the avenue that you must follow in going to Arnouville, monsieur."

"Once more, I thank you, my pretty child!" said M. de Saint Rémy; and he set off on a full gallop, followed by his groom.

The charming features of the viscount were somewhat relaxed during the time he spoke to Fleur de Marie; but, as soon as he was alone, they became contracted, from some deep and profound anxiety.

Fleur de Marie, recalling to her mind the unknown for whom the pavilion at Arnouville had been furnished in such haste, doubted not but that it was for this person. The gallop of the horses shook for some time the hard-frozen ground; the noise became less; it ceased. Tortillard breathed again. Wishing to notify and prepare his accomplices, he cried, "Grandmother! here I am, with a good lady, who comes to your assistance!" "Quick, quick, my child! this gentleman on horseback has made us lose time," said the Goualeuse, hastening her steps. Hardly had she reached the spot, when La Chouette whispered, "She is mine, Fourline!" Then, springing at the Goualeuse, the Borgnesse seized her by the throat with one hand, while, with the other, she stopped her mouth. In the mean time Tortillard threw himself at the feet of the young girl, which he clasped in his arms to prevent her moving. All this passed so rapidly, that La Chouette had not had the time to examine the features of La Goualeuse; but while the Maître d'Ecole was creeping out of the hole where he had been concealed, the old woman recognised her former victim.

"Pegriotte!" cried she, at first stupefied; then added, with savage joy: "It is, then, you! Ah! it is the devil who sends you to me; it is your fate, then, always to fall under my claws! I have my vitriol in the carriage; this time your pretty mug sha'n't escape, for you make me sick with your virgin face. Take hold, my man! be careful she don't bite. Hold tight while we bundle her up."

With two powerful hands the Maître d'Ecole seized the Goualeuse, and before she could utter a cry, La Chouette threw the mantle over her head, and wrapped her up closely. In a moment Fleur de Marie, tied and gagged, was in no situation either to make a movement or utter a cry for assistance.

"Now, you take charge of the bundle," said La Chouette. "Eh! eh! eh! it is not quite so heavy as the negro of a woman that was drowned in the canal of St. Martin: is it, my man?" And as the brigand shuddered at these words, which recalled the frightful dream of the past night, the Borgnesse continued: "Ah, now! what is the matter, Fourline? one would think you shivered! Since this morning, for instance, your teeth chatter as if you were looking for some one." "Old deceiver! he is looking at the flies," said Tortillard. "Come, quick, let us be off, my man! carry Pegriotte." "Very

well!" added La Chouette, seeing the brigand take Fleur de Marie in his arms like a sleeping child. Quick to the carriage—quick!"

"But who is going to lead me?" asked the Maître d'Ecole, in a mournful voice, and clasping tightly in his arms his light and fragile burden. "Old 'Tetard!' he thinks of everything," said La Chouette. And throwing off her shawl, she untied a red handkerchief which covered her bony neck, twisted it, and said, "Open your muzzle, take the end of this in your jaws; bite hard. Tortillard shall take the other end in his hand; you will only have to follow him—a good blind man must have a good dog. Here, 'Moutard!'" The little cripple made a bound, imitated the barking and yelping of a dog in a low tone, took the handkerchief in his hand, and thus conducted the Maître d'Ecole, while La Chouette hurried on to advise Barbillion. We have not attempted to describe the terror of Fleur de Marie when she found herself in the power of the Maître d'Ecole and La Chouette. She felt her weakness, and made no resistance. Some moments afterward, the Goualeuse was placed in the carriage driven by Barbillion; although it was dark, yet the blinds were carefully drawn, and the three accomplices, with their almost expiring victim, were rapidly conveyed to the plain of St. Denis, where Tom awaited them.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

CLEMENCE D'HARVILLE.

THE reader will excuse us for having abandoned one of our heroines in a situation so critical, a situation whose dénouement we will give by-and-by. The exigencies of this multiple tale, unfortunately too much varied in its unity, force us to pass continually from one personage to another, to keep up, as much as is in our power, the interest of the work (that is to say, if we have succeeded in creating any interest in a work, as difficult as it is conscientious and imperfect).

We have yet to follow some of the actors in this story to miserable garrets, where shudders with cold and hunger, a fearful, resigned, honest, and laborious poverty.

Into the prisons for men and women, sometimes fine and comfortable, sometimes dark and gloomy, but always vast schools of misery, a disgusting and vitiated atmosphere, where innocence withers and fades away; gloomy pandemoniums, where an accused may enter pure, but from whence he comes out almost always corrupted.

Into the hospitals, where the poor, treated sometimes with touching humanity, reject also sometimes the solitary bed which they moistened with icy sweat of fever. Into these mysterious asylums, where the poor neglected and forsaken being, brings into the world, bathing it with bitter tears, the child which she is never destined to see again. Into these horrible places, where madness, touching, ridiculous, stupid, hideous, or ferocious, shows itself under aspects always frightful; from the peaceful lu-

natic, who laughs sadly with that laugh which causes one to weep; to the phrensiad madman, who roars like a ferocious beast in grapping the irons of his den. We have, besides, to explore—

But for what purpose do we make this long enumeration? Will we not alarm the reader? he has already been pleased to follow us into places strange enough; he would hesitate, perhaps to accompany us in our new peregrinations. Having said this, let us proceed.

* * * * *

It will be recollected that the evening preceding the day on which the events that we have just related took place (the carrying off of the Goualeuse by La Chouette), Rodolphe had saved Madame d'Harville from an imminent danger, a danger created by the jealousy of Sarah, who had advised M. d'Harville of the meeting so imprudently granted by the marchioness to M. Charles Robert.

Rodolphe, quite overcome with this scene, had returned home after leaving the house in the Rue du Temple, putting off till the next day the visit that he had intended to make Made-moiselle Rigolette, and to the family of the unfortunate workman of whom we have spoken; for he believed them relieved from want by the money which he had transmitted to them by the marchioness, in order to render her pretended visit of charity more probable in the eyes of her husband. Unfortunately, Rodolphe forgot that Tortillard had stolen the purse, and the reader knows in what manner he committed this audacious robbery. Towards four o'clock the prince received the following letter. An old woman brought it, and went away without receiving any answer.

"MONSIEUR,

"I owe you more than life; I will express to you to-day, therefore, my profound gratitude. To-morrow, perhaps, shame will make me silent. If you could do me the honour to come to me to-night, you would finish this day as you have commenced it, monseigneur, by a generous action.

D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"P.S. Do not give yourself the trouble to answer, monseigneur; I shall be at home all the evening."

Rodolphe, happy at having rendered Madame d'Harville an eminent service, nevertheless regretted the kind of forced intimacy that this circumstance would thus suddenly establish between him and the marquise. Incapable of betraying the friendship of M. d'Harville, but profoundly touched with the grace and attractive beauty of Clémence, Rodolphe had almost given up her society after a month's assiduities.

He also recalled, with emotion, the conversation he had overheard at the embassy of *** between Tom and Sarah. The latter assigned as a reason for her hatred and jealousy, that Madame d'Harville had, almost without knowing it, a serious affection for Rodolphe; Sarah was too sagacious, too cunning, too well acquainted with the human heart, not to have perceived that Clémence, believing herself neglected, perhaps despised, by a man who had made a profound impression on her—that Clémence, in her anger, yielding to the persuasions of a perfidious friend, could interest herself, almost unconsciously, in the imaginary misfortunes of

M. Charles Robert, and yet not entirely forget Rodolphe.

Other women, faithful to the recollections of the man they had at first preferred, would have remained indifferent to the melancholy looks of the Commandant. Clémence d'Harville was, then, doubly culpable; although she had yielded to an impulse of pity, yet a lively sentiment of duty, joined perhaps to the "souvenir" of the prince, a salutary remembrance, which watched over her by springing from the bottom of her heart, had preserved her from an irreparable fault. Rodolphe, thinking of his interview with Madame d'Harville, was a prey to opposite emotions. Firmly resolved to resist the feeling which drew him towards her, at one time he felt happy that he could reproach her for making such a choice as M. Charles Robert; and then, on the contrary, he regretted bitterly to see fall to the ground the illusion with which he had surrounded her.

Clémence d'Harville awaited also this interview with anxiety; the two predominating sensations were confusion and shame when she thought of Rodolphe, and bitter aversion when she thought of M. Charles Robert. This aversion, this hatred, was caused by many reasons. A woman will risk her honour, her reputation for a man; but she will never pardon him for having placed her in a humiliating or ridiculous position. Now Madame d'Harville, exposed as a butt to the sarcasms, the insulting looks of Madame Pipelet, had nearly died from shame. This was not all.

Receiving from Rodolphe a notice of the danger which she ran, Clémence had run quickly up to the fifth story; the direction of the stairs was such, that, as she mounted, she perceived M. Charles Robert clothed in his splendid robe de chambre, at the moment when, recognising the light step of the woman he expected, he opened the door with a smiling, confident, and all-conquering air. The insolent foppishness of the significant costume of the commandant, taught the marquise how much she had been grossly deceived by this man. Led on by the goodness of her heart, by the generosity of her character, to a proceeding which could ruin her, she had granted him this meeting not from love, but only from commiseration, that she might console him for the ridiculous part that the mauvais goût of M. de Lucenay had made him play before her at the embassy of * * *.

The timepiece in the small saloon which Madame d'Harville habitually occupied had just struck nine o'clock. The milliners and tavern-keepers have so much abused the style of Louis XV., and that of the Renaissance, that the marquise, a woman of much taste, had banished from her apartments this species of luxury, now become so vulgar, confining it to that part of the Hôtel d'Harville destined for grand receptions. Nothing could be more elegant and more "distinguished" than the furniture of the room where the marquise awaited Rodolphe. The hangings and curtains, without any drapery, were of India stuff, of straw colour; on this brilliant ground were embroidered, in raw silk of the same shade, arabesques of the most charming and capricious designs. Double curtains of Alençon

lace entirely concealed the windows. The doors of rose-wood, were enriched with mouldings of burnished silver, very beautifully carved, which framed, as it were, in each panel, an oval medallion of Sévres porcelain, each one about a foot in diameter, representing birds and flowers of most exquisite finish and effect. The frames of the glassess and the curtain-rods were also of rose-wood, ornamented the same way, with reliefs in burnished silver. The frieze of the white-marble chimney and its two cariatides, of antique beauty and fine workmanship, were from the master-chisel of Marochetti, this artist having consented to execute this delicious chef-d'œuvre, remembering, doubtless, that Benvenuto did not disdain to model ewers and arms. Two candelabras and two candelsticks of silver gilt, made by Gouthière, suited well with the clock, which was a square block of lapis lazuli, placed on a socle of Oriental jasper, and surmounted by a large and splendid golden vase, enamelled and enriched with pearls and rubies, and belonging to the finest period of the Florentine "renaissance." Several excellent pictures of the Venitian school, of medium size, completed an "ensemble" of great magnificence. Thanks to a charming innovation, this handsome saloon was softly lighted by a lamp whose globe of unpolished glass was half concealed by a tuft of natural flowers, contained in a large and deep vase of blue japan, purple and gold, suspended from the ceiling, like a lustre, by three heavy chains of silver gilt, to which were attached and entwined the green tendrils of several climbing plants; some of the flexible branches, laden with flowers, escaped from the cap, hung gracefully, like a fringe of fresh verdure, on the porcelain, enamelled with gold, purple, and azure.

We insist on these details, doubtless rather trifling, to give an idea of the natural good taste of Madame d'Harville (almost always a symptom of a good mind), and because that certain unknown griefs, certain mysterious troubles, seem still more poignant when they are contrasted with the appearance of that which makes, in the eyes of the world, life happy and envious. Seated in an arm-chair, entirely covered with the straw-colour India stuff, as was the rest of the furniture, Clémence d'Harville, with her hair dressed plainly, wore a robe of black velvet, which displayed to great advantage the exquisite embroidery of her collar and "manchettes" of English lace. As the time approached for her interview with Rodolphe, the emotion of the marquise redoubled; however, her confusion gave place to the most resolute thoughts; after long reflection, she determined to confide to Rodolphe a great—a cruel secret, hoping that her extreme frankness would conciliate, perhaps, an esteem of which she showed herself so jealous. Revived by gratitude, her first penchant for Rodolphe was awakened with renewed force. One of those presentiments which rarely deceive a loving heart, told her that chance alone had not led the prince, at such a juncture, to save her; and that, in ceasing for some months to visit her, he had obeyed a sentiment very different from aversion. A vague apprehension raised also in the mind of Clémence doubts on the sincerity of Sarah's affection. At the end of a few min-

lives, a valet de chambre, after having discreetly knocked at the door, entered and said, "Will Madame la Marquise receive Madame Ashton and mademoiselle?"

"Certainly—certainly, as always," answered Madame d'Harville. And her daughter then slowly entered into the saloon.

She was a child of four years of age, who would have been charming if it had not been for her unhealthy looks and her extreme delicateness. Madame Ashton, her governess, held her by the hand; Claire, notwithstanding her feeble state, ran towards her mother, stretching out her arms. Two knots of cherry-coloured riband confined on either side her brown hair; her health was so unsettled that she wore a little dress of brown wadded silk, instead of one of those pretty robes of white muslin, trimmed with ribands of the same shade as those she wore in her hair, which leaves exposed the rosy neck and arms, so charming to see in children of robust health. The large black eyes of this child seemed enormous, so much were her cheeks sunken in. Notwithstanding this frail appearance, a smile full of gentleness and grace was spread over the features of Claire when she was seated on the lap of her mother, who embraced her with a tenderness at once sad and impassioned. "How has she been since, Madame Ashton?" asked Madame d'Harville of the governess. "Pretty well, Madame la Marquise, although for a moment I feared—" "Once more!" cried Clémence, pressing her child to her heart with an involuntary movement of affright. "Happily, madame, I was deceived," said the governess; "the 'accès' did not occur; Mademoiselle Claire became calmer; she experienced but a moment's weakness; she has slept this afternoon, but she would not retire for the night without first embracing Madame la Marquise."

"Poor little angel!" said Madame d'Harville, covering her child with kisses; she returned the caresses with infantine joy, when the valet de chambre opened the folding doors of the saloon and announced, "His Serene Highness, my Lord the Grand-duke of Gerolstein!" Claire, mounted on the lap of her mother, had thrown her arms around her neck and embraced her closely. At the sight of Rodolphe, Clémence blushed, placed her child gently on the carpet, made a sign to Madame Ashton to take away her daughter, and stood up.

"You will permit me, madame," said Rodolphe, smiling, after having respectfully saluted the marquise, "to renew my acquaintance with my former little friend, who, I fear, has forgotten me;" and, stooping down, he held out his hand to Claire. She at first stared at him curiously with her two large black eyes; then recognising him, she made a slight sign with her head, and threw him a kiss from the ends of her delicate fingers. "You know monseigneur, my child?" asked Clémence; she nodded her head affirmatively, and sent another kiss to Rodolphe. "Her health appears better than when I last saw her," said the prince to Clémence.

"Monseigneur, she is a little better, yet still suffering."

The marquise and Rodolphe, equally embarrassed in thinking of the conversation that must

ensue, were almost satisfied at seeing it retarded for a few moments by the presence of Claire; but the governess having discreetly led off the child, Rodolphe and Clémence found themselves alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE CONFESSION.

THE chair of Madame d'Harville was placed to the right of the chimney-piece, against which Rodolphe leaned lightly. Never had Clémence been more struck with the noble and gracious air of the prince; never had his voice seemed to her more sweet and animating.

Feeling how painful it must be for the marquise to commence this conversation, Rodolphe said to her, "You have been, madame, the victim of a shameful treason: a scandalous accusation of the Countess Sarah M'Gregor had nearly caused your ruin."

"Can it be true! monseigneur?" cried Clémence. "My presentiments did not deceive me, then; and how did your highness discover it?"

"Yesterday, by chance, at the ball of the countess, I discovered their infamous designs. I was seated in a retired part of the winter garden. Ignorant that a mass of shrubbery separated me from them, which yet permitted me to hear their conversation, the Countess Sarah and her brother came to converse together of their projects, and of the snare they had laid for you. Wishing to inform you of the danger with which you were threatened, I went, in great haste, to the ball of Madame de Norval, thinking to find you. You had not appeared there. To write you this morning was to expose my letter to the chance of falling into the hands of the marquis, whose suspicions were already awakened. I preferred to go and wait for you at the Rue du Temple, to baffle the schemes of the Countess Sarah. You will pardon me for conversing so long on a subject that must be disagreeable to you? Without the letter which you had the goodness to write me, never would I have spoken to you of all this." After a moment's silence, Madame d'Harville said,

"I have only one way, monseigneur, to prove to you my gratitude. It is to make an avowal to you that I have never yet made to any one. This avowal will not justify me in your eyes, but perhaps it will make you find my conduct less culpable."

"Frankly, madame," said Rodolphe, smiling, "my position towards you is very embarrassing."

Clémence, astonished at his remark, looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "How, monseigneur?"

"Thanks to a circumstance that you will imagine without doubt. I am obliged to play the grandpapa, in relation to an adventure which, from the moment you escaped from the snare which the odious Countess Sarah laid for you, merits not to be thought of so seriously; but," added Rodolphe, with a slight shade more of gravity, "your husband is to me almost a brother; my father had vowed to his father the most affectionate gratitude. It is, then, very cordially that I felicitate you on having obtained for your husband repose and reliance." "And it is also that because you honour Ma-

dame d'Harville with your friendship, monseigneur, that I hold to inform you of the whole truth, both on a choice which must seem to you as unfortunate, as it really is, and on my conduct, which offends him who your highness almost calls his brother." "I shall always be, madame, happy and proud of the smallest proof of your confidence. However, permit me to say, respecting the choice of which you speak, that I know you had as much regard to a feeling of compassion as to the entreaties of the Countess M'Gregor, who had her reasons for wishing to ruin you. I know also that you hesitated a long time before you concluded on a proceeding which you now so much regret."

Clémence looked at the prince with surprise.

"That astonishes you? I will tell you my secret some other time, so that you shall not think me a sorcerer," continued Rodolphe, smiling; "but your husband—is he completely reconciled?"

"Yes, monseigneur," said Clémence, casting down her eyes in confusion; "and I acknowledge to you, it is impossible to me to hear him ask pardon for having suspected me, and to be so happy at my modest silence respecting my good works."

"He is happy in his illusions: do not distress yourself; keep him always, on the contrary, in his gentle error. If it was not improper for me to speak lightly of this adventure, and if it were not concerning you, madame, I would say that a woman is never more charming to her husband than when she has something to conceal. One has no idea of all the seducing 'calineries' that a bad conscience inspires, nor imagine how many beautiful flowers are caused to bloom from a perfidy. When I was young," added Rodolphe, smiling, "I always felt, in spite of myself, a kind of vague indifference to any uncommon expressions of tenderness; and as on my own part I never felt more at my ease than when I had done something that required to be pardoned, as soon as they showed themselves as dissemblingly amiable as I wished myself to appear, I was certain that this charming harmony concealed a mutual infidelity."

Madame d'Harville was more and more surprised at hearing Rodolphe speak so lightly of an adventure which might have had for her such terrible consequences; but, soon thinking that the prince, by this affectation of levity, endeavoured to lessen the importance of the service he had rendered her, she said, deeply touched with this delicacy, "I comprehend your generosity, monseigneur. It is permitted for you now to joke about the perils from which you have saved me. But that which I now have to say to you is so serious, so sad, it has so much to do with the events of the morning, your advice can be so useful to me, that I beg you to remember that you have saved my honour, my life—yes, monseigneur, my life. My husband was armed; he told me, in the excess of his acknowledgments, that he wished to kill me!"

"Grand Dieu!" cried Rodolphe, with lively emotion.

"It was his right," answered Madame d'Harville, bitterly.

"I conjure you, madame," said Rodolphe, very seriously, "to believe me incapable of remaining indifferent to anything that interests you; if just now I joked, it is because I did not wish to add to your sorrows, which have caused you so much disturbance. Now, madame, I will

seriously listen, since you do me the honour to say my counsels may be of service to you."

"Oh! of great service, monseigneur! But, before I ask them of you, permit me to say a few words on the past, of which you are ignorant—of the years which preceded my marriage with M. d'Harville."

Rodolphe bowed; Clémence continued: "At sixteen I lost my mother," said she, unable to restrain a tear; "I will not tell you how much I adored her; imagine, monseigneur, the ideal of all earthly goodness; her tenderness for me was extreme; in this she found a profound consolation for bitter griefs. Not fond of society, of delicate health, naturally very sedentary, her greatest pleasure was to charge herself with my education; for her solid and varied knowledge permitted her to fulfil better than any one the task she had assumed for herself. Judge, monseigneur, of her astonishment, of mine, when at sixteen years, at the moment when my education was almost finished, my father, making as a pretext the weak health of my mother, announced to us that a young widow, very much distinguished, whom great misfortunes had rendered very interesting, would finish what my mother had commenced. My mother refused at first to comply. I begged him not to place between us a stranger. He was inexorable, notwithstanding our tears. Madame Roland, widow of a colonel who died in the Indies, as she said, came to live with us, and was installed as my instructress."

"How! it is this Madame Roland who your father married almost immediately after your marriage?" "Yes! monseigneur." "She was then very handsome?" "Passably so, monseigneur." "Very intellectual, then?" "Filled with dissimulation—cunning—nothing more: she was about twenty-five, very blonde, hair almost white, and large blue eyes; her expression was humble and affected; her character perfidious even to cruelty."

"And her education?" "Absolutely ignorant, and I cannot comprehend how my father, until then the very slave of appearances, had not thought that the incapacity of this woman would scandalously betray the true motive of her presence in his house. My mother observed to him, that Madame Roland was profoundly ignorant; he answered in a tone which admitted of no reply, 'that educated or not, this young and interesting widow should preserve in his house the position in which he had placed her.' From this moment my poor mother comprehended all, and was deeply affected—deploring less, I think, the infidelity of my father, than the troubles this aberration must produce, and which even I might find out."

"But, in effect, your father, it seems to me, made a bad calculation in introducing this woman into his house."

"Your astonishment would be much increased, monseigneur, if you knew that my father is one of the most precise and rigid men I ever knew. To have arrived at such an entire forgetfulness of all convenience, must have been owing to the excessive influence of Madame Roland; an influence so much the more certain, as she concealed it under the mask of a violent affection for him."

"How old was your father about this time?" "Sixty years."

"And he believed in the love of this young woman?"

"My father had been one of the most fashionable men of his day. Madame Roland, from instinct or from some advice—"

"From advice? And who could advise her?"

"I will tell you all directly, monseigneur. Supposing that a man of fashion, when he becomes old, takes so much the more to be flattered on his personal advantages, as these praises would recall the gay days of his youth; this woman, would you believe it, monseigneur? flattered my father on the grace and charms of his features; on his inimitable elegance of shape and figure; and he was sixty years old. Every one appreciated his fine mind; yet he fell blindly into this gross snare. Such has been—such is yet, I doubt not, the cause of the influence of this woman over him. Hold, monseigneur; notwithstanding my sad reflections, I cannot but smile in recollecting that, before my marriage, I have often heard it said and sustained by Madame Roland, that what she called *real maturity*, was the finest portion of human existence: this *real maturity* did not commence, in her opinion, until towards fifty-five or sixty years." "The age of your father?" "Yes, monseigneur. 'Then alone,' said Madame Roland, 'the mind and experience attain their greatest development; then only a man eminently placed in the world enjoys all the consideration he can possibly attain; then alone the "ensemble" of his features, the fine grace of his manners, attain their perfection; the face offering, at this time of life, a rare and Divine mixture of gracious serenity and calm gravity. Finally, a slight tinge of melancholy, caused by the deceptions which experience ever teaches, completed the irresistible charms of a *real maturity*—charms only to be appreciated,' added Madame Roland, 'by women of mind and judgment, who have the good taste to turn their backs on the puerility of the giddy men of forty years, whose character offers no security, and whose features, of an insignificant juvenility, are not sufficiently poetized by that majesty of expression which reveals the profound knowledge of life.'"

Rodolphe could not prevent himself from smiling at the ironical manner with which Madame d'Harville traced the portrait of her stepmother. "There is one thing that I never pardon in foolish, ridiculous people," said he to the marquise.

"What is that, monseigneur?" "It is to be wicked—that prevents one from laughing at them at one's ease." "It is, perhaps, a calculation on their part," said Clémence.

"I believe it, and it is a pity; for, by example, if I could forget that this Madame Roland necessarily has caused you much sorrow, I should be much amused at this invention of the *real maturity*, opposed to the lively follies of those conceited young puppies of forty, who, according to this woman, seem hardly to have thrown off their dress of pages, as our grandfathers would have said."

"My father is at least, I believe, happy in the illusions with which, even now, my stepmother surrounds him. Thus, monseigneur, since my father is happy, I should not, perhaps, complain of Madame Roland; but her odious conduct towards my mother—the unfortunate part, too active, that she has taken respecting my marriage, cause my aversion towards her," said Madame d'Harville, after a moment's hesitation.

Rodolphe regarded her with surprise.

"M. d'Harville is your friend, monseigneur," continued Clémence, in a firm tone. "I know the gravity of the words I have just uttered: directly you shall tell me if they are just. But I return to Madame Roland, installed as my instructress, notwithstanding her acknowledged incapacity. My mother had, on this subject, a painful explanation with my father, and signified to him that, wishing, at least, to protest against the intolerable position of this woman, henceforth she would not appear at the table if Madame Roland did not at once leave the house. My mother was sweetness, goodness itself; but she became of indomitable firmness, when her personal dignity was in question. My mother was inflexible—she kept her promise. From this moment we lived completely secluded in her apartment: my father from that time showed me as much coldness as he did to my mother, while Madame Roland did, almost openly the honours of our house, yet still as my instructress."

"Your mother must have suffered much."

"More on my account than on her own, monseigneur, for she thought of the future. Her health, already very delicate, became still more feeble: fatality willed it, that our family physician, M. Sorbier, died. My mother placed every confidence in him; she bitterly regretted him. Madame Roland had for physician and friend an Italian doctor of great merit, as she said: my father, imposed upon, consulted him sometimes, was pleased with him, and proposed him to my mother, who took him, alas! and it was he who took charge of her during her last illness." At these words the eyes of Madame d'Harville became filled with tears. "I am ashamed to acknowledge this weakness, monseigneur," added she; "but, for the very reason that this doctor had been recommended by Madame Roland, I felt an aversion for him. I saw, with a kind of fear, my mother grant him her confidence; yet, as regards science, the doctor Polidori—"

"What do you say, madame?" cried Rodolphe.

"What is the matter, monseigneur?" said Clémence, startled at the expression of Rodolphe.

"But no," said the prince to himself. "I am doubtless mistaken—this is five or six years ago—while they told me that Polidori has been in Paris, under an assumed name, for not more than two years. It is certainly he who I saw yesterday—this quack Bradamant—yet—two physicians of the same name: what a singular coincidence! Madame, a word about Polidori; what age was this Italian?" "About fifty, I should think." "And his face; his countenance?" "Wicked. I shall never forget his green eyes; his nose hooked like the beak of an eagle." "It is he! It is certainly he!" cried Rodolphe.

CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY.

"And do you think, madame, that Doctor Polidori dwelt then in Paris?" asked Rodolphe of Madame d'Harville.

"I do not know, monseigneur. About a year after the marriage of my father, he left Paris: one of my friends, whose physician this Italian was at this time, Madame de Lucenay—"

"The Duchess of Lucenay?" said Rodolphe. "Yes, monseigneur." "But why this surprise?"

"Allow me to be silent on this head. But at this time, what did Madame de Lucenay say about this man?"

"That she received from him often, since his departure from Paris, letters very amusing, descriptive of the countries he visited. Now, remember, that about a month since, asking Madame de Lucenay if she still received news from M. Polidori, she answered with an embarrassed air, that for a long time she had not heard of him, that none knew what had become of him, and that many persons thought he was dead." "It is singular," said Rodolphe, remembering the visit of Madame de Lucenay to the quack Bradamanté.

"You know this man, then, monseigneur?"

"Yes, unfortunately for me. But, pray, continue your story; I will tell you directly who is this Polidori." "How! this physician?" "Rather say this man, stained with the most odious crimes." "Crimes!" replied Madame d'Harville, with affright. "He has committed crimes—this man? the friend of Madame Roland, and the physician of my mother! My mother died under his hands after a few days' illness! Ah! monseigneur, you alarm me! you tell me too much, or not enough."

"Without accusing this man of one crime the more—without accusing your stepmother of being an accomplice, I say that you ought to thank God that your father, after his marriage with Madame Roland, had no need of the services of Polidori."

"Oh! Mon Dieu!" cried madame d'Harville, in a touching accent. "My presentiments, then, did not deceive me?"

"Your presentiments?"

"Yes; just now I spoke to you of the aversion I felt for this man, because he had been introduced to us by Madame Roland. I did not tell you all, monseigneur." "How?"

"I feared to accuse an innocent person; to listen too much to the bitterness of my sorrows. But I am going to tell you all, monseigneur. The illness of my mother lasted five days; I had always nursed her. One evening I went to breathe the fresh air on the terrace of our house: at the end of a quarter of an hour, I re-entered by a long, obscure corridor. At the feeble gleam of light which escaped from the door of the apartment of Madame Roland, I saw M. Polidori go out; this woman accompanied him. I was in the shade; they did not see me. Madame Roland said some words to him in a low voice that I could not hear; the physician answered in a louder tone these words, '*After to-morrow.*' And as Madame Roland spoke to him again, he answered in a singular tone, '*After to-morrow.*' I tell you, *after to-morrow.*" "What did these words signify?" "They signified, monseigneur, the evening of Wednesday. M. Polidori said, '*after to-morrow*—the Friday my mother was dead!" "Oh! this is frightful." "When I reflected on these words, *after to-morrow*, which seemed to have predicted the death of my mother, I thought that M. Polidori, knowing, from his medical science, how long my mother had to live, had hastened to inform Madame Roland—this woman, who had so many reasons to be rejoiced at her death. But never would I have dared to suppose—oh! no, no, even at this hour, I cannot believe in such a crime!" "Was Po-

lidi the only physician who attended your unfortunate mother?"

The evening previous to her death, he brought in consultation one of his associates. According to what my father told me afterward, this doctor found my mother in a very dangerous state. After this fatal event, I was taken to one of my old relations. She had tenderly loved my mother. Forgetting the reserve due to my age, she taught me how much reason I had to hate Madame Roland. She enlightened me as to the ambitious hopes this woman would thence entertain.

"This information overwhelmed me; I then comprehended all my mother must have suffered. When I saw my father, my heart was almost broken; he came to take me with him to Normandy; there we were to pass the time of our first mourning. During the journey he wept much, and said he had no one but me to aid him to support this terrible blow. I answered that he, alone also, remained to me, since the loss of my adored mother. After some words on the embarrassment he should experience if at any time he might be obliged to be absent, he told me, as if it was the most natural thing in the world, that out of kindness for him and me, Madame Roland had consented to take the charge of his house, and serve me as guide and friend.

"Astonishment, grief, indignation, rendered me dumb. I wept in silence—my father asked me the cause of my tears. I replied, perhaps with too much bitterness, that I would never live in the same house with Madame Roland; for I despised this woman as much as I hated her on account of the grief she had caused my mother. He remained calm; combated what he called my childishness, and said to me, coldly, that his resolution was unconquerable, and that I should submit.

"I begged him to allow me to retire to the *Sacré Cœur*, where I had some friends: I would remain there till he thought proper to marry me. He observed to me that the time was passed when people were married at the grate of a convent; that my readiness to leave him would affect him very much, if he did not see in my words an independence which he could excuse, though he thought it not very sensible, and which would necessarily calm down; then he kissed my forehead, and called me a little vixen.

"Alas! in effect, it was necessary to submit. Judge, monseigneur, of my grief—to live every day with a woman whom I almost reproached as the cause of my mother's death. I foresaw the most cruel scenes between my father and me, no consideration preventing me from showing my aversion to Madame Roland. It seemed to me that thus I avenged my mother, while the smallest word of affection said to this woman, would appear to me a sacrilege." "Mon Dieu, how painful this existence must have been to you. I was far from thinking that you had already suffered so much, when I had the pleasure to see you often! Never did a word from you make me suspect—"

"Then, monseigneur, I had not to exculpate myself from an unpardonable weakness. If I speak to you so much at length on this part of my life, it is to make you understand in what a position I was placed when I married; and why, notwithstanding a warning which ought to have enlightened me, I married M. d'Harville. On arriving at Aubiers (the name of my father's country-place), the first person who came to

meet us was Madame Roland. She had been here since the death of my mother. In spite of her humble manner, she cast a glance of triumphant joy, illy concealed. I shall never forget the look, at once ironical and wicked, she gave me on our arrival; she seemed to say, 'I am here at home, you are the stranger.' A new sorrow was reserved for me; either from want of discreet action or barefaced impudence, this woman occupied the apartments of my mother. In my indignation, I complained to my father of such proceedings; he answered me severely, that this should astonish me less, as it was necessary I should habituate myself to consider and respect Madame Roland as a second mother. I told him this would be a profanation of the sacred name; and, to his great indignation, I lost no occasion to show my aversion to Madame Roland; several times he reprimanded me before her. He reproached me for my ingratitude, my coldness towards this angel of consolation that Heaven had sent us. 'I beg, my father,' said I, one day, 'speak for yourself.' He treated me cruelly. Madame Roland, in her honeyed tones, interceded for me with profound hypocrisy. 'Be indulgent to Clémence,' said she; 'the regrets with which the excellent person we mourn inspires her are so natural, so praiseworthy, that we must respect her grief, and pity her even in her anger.' 'Well!' said my father, pointing to Madame Roland with admiration, 'did you hear her! is she not too generous? too good? It is by throwing yourself in her arms you ought to answer.' 'It is useless, my father; madame hates me, and I hate her.' 'Ah! Clémence you give me much pain, but I pardon you,' added Madame Roland, lifting her eyes towards heaven. 'My friend! my noble friend!' cried my father, in a faltering voice, 'calm yourself, I conjure you; for my sake have pity on a fool who needs it for despising you thus!' Then turning on me his angry looks, 'Tremble,' cried he—'If you dare to outrage again the most charming being there is in the universe—make your apologies to her this moment.' 'My mother sees and hears me; she will never pardon such an action,' said I to my father, and I went out, leaving him occupied in consoling Madame Roland, and drying her hypocritical tears. Pardon me, monseigneur, for dwelling on these incidents, but they can alone give you an idea of the life I then led.

'I can almost imagine myself present at scenes so sadly true. In how many families have they before occurred, and how many times will they be repeated! Nothing can be more vulgar, and yet nothing can be more cunning, than the conduct of Madame Roland; but in what manner did he present her to the neighbourhood?' 'As my instructress and his friend; and she was received as such. With the exception of some rare visits, caused by business, or some relations with the neighbourhood, we saw no one; my father, completely governed by his passion, ceding, without doubt, to the instances of Madame Roland, left off, at the end of three months, his mourning, under the pretext that mourning affected him too much. His coolness towards me augmented daily; his indifference reached such a point, that he left me a liberty quite unusual for a young person of my age. I saw him at breakfast; he afterward retired to his rooms with Madame Roland, who served him as secretary for his correspondence or business; then he went out with her in the

carriage or on foot, and did not return until an hour before dinner. Madame Roland then dressed herself with great taste, and my father followed her example with a *recherche* very singular at his age; sometimes, after dinner, he received those persons whom he was obliged to see; afterward he made a party of backgammon until ten o'clock with Madame Roland, then he offered her his arm to conduct her to the chamber of my mother, kissed her hand respectfully, and retired. As for me, I could dispose of my day as I pleased, ride on horseback, followed by a groom, or take long walks in the woods which surrounded the chateau, sometimes overwhelmed with sorrow. I did not appear at breakfast; my father gave himself no trouble even—

"What singular conduct! what abandonment!"

"Having several times met one of our neighbours in the woods where I ordinarily rode, I gave up these excursions, and I entered the park no more." "But what was the conduct of this woman towards you when you were alone with her?"

"We both avoided, as much as possible, these encounters. Once only, in making allusion to some hard words which I had addressed to her the evening previous, she said to me coldly, 'Take care; you wish to quarrel with me; you will be defeated.' 'Like my mother?' said I; 'it is a pity, madame, that M. Polidori is not here to advise you what will happen—after to-morrow.' These words produced a great impression, which, however, she soon overcame. Now that I know, thanks to you, monseigneur, who this Dr. Polidori is, and of what he is capable, the kind of fright that Madame Roland showed on hearing me utter these mysterious words, would confirm, perhaps, horrible suspicions. But no, no; I do not wish to believe that. I should be too much alarmed to think that my father is at this moment almost at the mercy of my stepmother." "And what reply did she make when you uttered these words of the Doctor Polidori?" "She blushed at first; then, overcoming her emotion, she asked me coolly what I meant. 'When you are alone, madam, interrogate yourself; you can answer.' A short time after this, a scene took place which decided my fate. Among a great number of family pictures, ornamenting a saloon where we assembled every evening, was the portrait of my mother. One day I found it gone. Two of our neighbours had dined with us; one of them, M. Dorral, a notary, had always shown for my mother the most profound veneration. On arriving in the saloon, 'Where is the portrait of my mother?' said I to my father. 'The sight of this picture caused me too much sorrow,' he answered in an embarrassed manner, with a glance of his eyes directing me to the strangers who witnessed the scene. 'And where is this portrait now, my father?' Turning towards Madame Roland, and interrogating her with a look and movement of impatience, 'Where have they put the portrait?' he asked her. 'In the storeroom,' she answered, casting at me a look of defiance, believing that the presence of our neighbours would prevent a reply. 'I conceive,' madam, said I, coldly, 'that the sight of my mother must be disagreeable to you; but this is no reason why you should send to the garret the portrait of the woman who, when you were wretched, charitably allowed you to live in her house.'"

"Very well!" cried Rodolphe. "This cold disdain was most cutting. 'Mademoiselle!'

cried my father. 'You will acknowledge, however,' said I, interrupting him, 'that a person who meanly insults the memory of a woman who gave her alms, merits but disdain and aversion.' My father for a moment was confounded; Madame Roland became purple with shame and rage; the neighbours, very much embarrassed, cast down their eyes and remained silent. 'Mademoiselle!' continued my father, 'you forget that madame was the friend of your mother; you forget that madame has watched and still watches over your education with maternal solicitude. You forget, also, that I profess for her the most respectful esteem. And since you allow yourself such proceedings before these gentlemen, I will say to you, that the ungrateful and cowardly are those who, forgetting the most tender cares, dare to reproach a noble unfortunate who merits interest and respect.' 'I will not allow myself to discuss this question with you, my father,' said I, in a submissive tone. 'Perhaps, mademoiselle, I shall be more fortunate!' cried Madame Roland, carried this time by anger beyond the bounds of her habitual prudence. 'Perhaps you will do me the favour not to discuss,' continued she, 'but to avow that, far from owing the least gratitude to your mother, I have only the recollection of the coolness she always showed me; for it was much against her will that I have—' 'Ah! madame,' said I, interrupting her, 'out of respect to my father, and out of shame for yourself, spare us these disgraceful revelations. You make me regret having exposed you to such humiliating confessions.' 'How! mademoiselle!' cried she, almost mad with rage; 'you dare to say—' 'I say, madame,' continued I, once more interrupting her, 'I say that my mother, in deigning to permit you to live in her house instead of driving you out of it, as she had the right to do, ought to have convinced you, by her contempt, that her tolerance towards you was imposed.' 'Better and better!' cried Rodolphe; 'it was a complete execution. And this woman?'

"Madame Roland, by a very vulgar method, but very convenient, terminated this conversation; she cried 'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!' and pretended a sudden illness. Thanks to this incident, the two witnesses of this scene went out under the pretext of seeking assistance; I imitated them, while my father overwhelmed her with the most anxious attentions. The next morning he came to me, and said, 'In order that for the future scenes like those of yesterday shall not be repeated, I declare to you, as soon as the time of my mourning has expired, I shall marry Madame Roland. You will henceforth have to treat her with the respect due to my wife. For private reasons, it is necessary that you should be married before me; the fortune of your mother, which is more than a million, is your dowry. From this day I shall actively employ myself to procure you a suitable marriage, by accepting propositions that have already been made to me on this subject; the persistence with which you attack, in spite of my admonitions, a person who is so dear to me, shows me the strength of your attachment for me. Madame Roland despises these attacks; but I will not suffer that such conduct shall be renewed before strangers, in my own house. In future you will not enter or remain in the saloon, except when Madame Roland or myself are there alone.' After this last conversation, I lived still more isolated. I only saw my father at the hours of repast; my life

was so sad, that I awaited with impatience the moment when my father would propose to me a match, which I intended to accept, no matter with whom. Madame Roland having refrained from speaking ill of my mother, revenged herself otherwise; to exasperate me, she made use of a thousand things that had belonged to her: her arm-chair, her tapestry-frame, the books of her private library, even to a screen that I had embroidered for her, on which was her cipher. This woman polluted everything." "Oh! I conceive the horror that these profanations must have caused you." "I had no one to whom I could confide my sorrows. Yet I received a proof of interest which touched me, and which ought to have enlightened me as to the future: since the day I had treated Madame Roland so harshly before two witnesses, I saw no one. One day, to my great surprise, M. Dorral, the notary of whom I have spoken, came to seek me in the park, where I walked daily. 'Mademoiselle!' said he, 'I am afraid that the count should see me; read this letter, and burn it afterward; it contains something of importance to you.' And he disappeared.

"In this letter he told me that it was in agitation to marry me to M. le Marquis d'Harville; this seemed agreeable on all sides; I was assured of the good qualities of M. d'Harville; he was young, very rich, of a fine mind, and agreeable person. And yet the families of two young persons, to whom he had been successively engaged, had suddenly broken the projected marriage. The notary could not tell me the reason of this rupture, but he believed it his duty to inform me of it. The two young persons spoken of were daughters, one of M. de Beauregard, peer of France, the other of Lord Bolthrop. M. Dorral confided all this to me, because that my father, very impatient to conclude my marriage, appeared to attach no importance to these facts."

CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE STORY.

"In effect," said Rodolphe, after some moments of reflection, "I remember now that your husband, in the interval of a year, communicated to me the two projected marriages, which, about to be concluded, had been broken off, as he wrote me, on some discussions of moment."

Madame d'Harville smiled bitterly, and answered,

"You will know the truth directly, monseigneur. After having read the letter of the old notary, I felt as much curiosity as inquietude. Who was M. d'Harville? My father had never spoken of him. Soon Madame Roland, to my great astonishment, set out for Paris. Her absence was to last eight days at farthest; yet my father showed much grief at this separation; his temper became more sour; his coldness towards me was redoubled. One day I asked him how he was: 'I am suffering, and it is your fault.' 'My fault, my father?' 'Certainly! You know how much I am habituated to the society of Madame Roland, yet this admirable woman whom you have outraged, makes this journey, which withdraws her from me, for your interest alone.' This interest of Madame Roland alarmed me; I had a vague suspicion that it regarded my marriage. I leave you to imagine, monseigneur, the joy of my father at the return of my future stepmother. The next

day he sent for me; he was alone with her. 'I have,' said he to me, 'for a long time thought of your establishment. Your mourning will be finished in a month. To-morrow M. le Marquis d'Harville will arrive here; a young man, très distingué, very rich, and in everything capable of securing your happiness. He has seen you in society; he ardently desires this union; all the preliminaries are arranged. It will then absolutely depend on you, to be married within six weeks. If, on the contrary, from a caprice that I will not force you, you should refuse this offer almost unhopd-for, I will marry, according to my intention; as soon as the time of my mourning is over. In this latter case, I must say to you, your presence in my house will only be agreeable if you promise to show to my wife the tenderness and respect she deserves.' 'I comprehend, my father. If I do not marry M. d'Harville, you will be married; and then, for you and for madame, it would no longer be undesirable if I should retire to the *Sacré Cœur*?' 'Right!' answered he, coldly."

"Ah! it is no longer weakness, it is cruelty!" cried Rodolphe.

"Do you know, monseigneur, what has always prevented me from entertaining against my father any resentment? It is that a kind of foresight tells me that some day he will pay, dearly pay, for his blind passion to Madame Roland. And, 'Dieu merci' this day has not yet come."

"And did you say nothing to him of what the old notary had told you in his letter concerning M. d'Harville?"

"Yes, monseigneur. That very day I begged my father to grant me a private interview. 'I have no secrets for Madame Roland; you can speak before her,' he answered. I remained silent. He said severely: 'Once more I tell you I have no secrets for Madame Roland. Explain yourself, then, clearly.' 'If you will permit me, my father, I will wait until you are alone.' Madame Roland arose and went out. 'Now you are satisfied!' said he to me; 'well! speak.' 'I feel no reluctance for the union you propose to me, my father; only I have heard that M. d'Harville has twice been on the point of being married.' 'Well, well!' said he, interrupting me; 'I know it! These ruptures have taken place in consequence of some difficulties in the settlements—the conduct of M. d'Harville has been beyond censure. If you have no other objection than this, you may consider yourself married, and happily married—for I only wish for your happiness.'"

"Doubtless Madame Roland was delighted at this union?"

"Delighted! Yes, monseigneur," said Clémence, bitterly; "oh! much delighted! for this union was her work. She gave the first idea of it to my father. She knew the true reason of the rupture of the first two engagements of M. d'Harville—that was the cause of her wishing me to espouse him." "But for what end?" "She wished to avenge herself on me, in wedding me thus to a frightful lot." "But your father?"

"Deceived by Madame Roland, he believed that the reasons he had assigned were the true ones."

"What a horrible plot! But this mysterious reason?"

"I will tell you directly, monseigneur. M. d'Harville arrived at Aubiers; his manners, his conversation, his figure pleased me: he seemed kind, good, but slightly melancholy. I remarked

in him a contrast which astonished, yet was agreeable to me; his mind was richly cultivated, his fortune enviable, his birth illustrious, and yet sometimes his countenance, ordinarily energetic and resolute, expressed a kind of timidity almost fearful—a dejection, a distrust of himself which touched me much. I liked also to see him show so much kindness as he did to an old valet de chambre, who had been with him from his boyhood, and who alone waited on him. Some time after his arrival, M. d'Harville remained two days in his room. My father wished to see him. The old servant opposed it, pretending that his master's head was so much affected, that he could not see any one. When M. d'Harville made his appearance again, I found him very pale, very much changed. He seemed to be annoyed if any one spoke of his illness. As I became better acquainted with him, I discovered in him many agreeable qualities. He had so many reasons to be happy, that I gave him credit for moderation in his happiness. The time of our marriage concluded upon, he anticipated the least of my wishes in our future projects. If sometimes I asked him the cause of his melancholy, he spoke to me of his father, his mother, who would have been proud to see him married according to his wishes and hopes. I should have had bad taste not to receive reasons that were so flattering to me. M. d'Harville imagined how I had lived until then with Madame Roland and my father, although the latter, pleased with my intended marriage, which advanced his own, showed me great affection. In several conversations, M. d'Harville made me feel, with much tact and reserve, that he loved me still more on account of my past sorrows. I thought I ought on this subject to inform him that my father proposed to marry again; and as I spoke to him of the change that this union would have on my fortune, he did not let me finish, and gave me proofs of the most noble disinterestedness: the families to whom he had been on the point of being allied must be very sordid, thought I then, to have so many difficulties with him."

"Just so I have ever found him," said Rodolphe; "filled with delicacy, affection, and generosity; but did you never speak to him of these engagements?" "I avow to you, monseigneur, seeing him so devoted, so good, several times this question came to my lips; but soon, from fear even of wounding this devotion, this goodness, I did not dare to approach the subject. The nearer the day of our marriage approached, the more he spoke of his happiness. Yet two or three times I saw him overwhelmed with sadness; one day he cast his eyes upon me; I saw a tear; he seemed oppressed; one would have said that he wished but to confide a secret to me. The recollection of the broken engagements came to my mind. I acknowledge I was afraid. I felt a presentiment that perhaps it was a question of the happiness of my whole life; but I was so situated at home that I surmounted my fears."

"The witnesses of M. d'Harville, M. de Lucenay and M. de Saint Rémy, arrived at Aubiers some days before my marriage; my nearest relations were alone invited. We were to start for Paris immediately after mass. I did not feel any love for M. d'Harville, but I was interested in him; his character inspired me with esteem. Except for the event which followed this fatal union, a more tender sentiment would doubtless have attached me to him forever."

"We were married." At these words Madame d'Harville became pale; her resolution appeared to abandon her. Then she continued: "As soon as we were married, my father pressed me tenderly in his arms. Madame Roland also embraced me. I could not, before so many people, prevent this new hypocrisy; with her dry and white hand she squeezed my hand so as to give me pain, and whispered in a soft, perfidious voice, these words that I shall never forget: 'Think sometimes of me in the midst of your happiness; for it is I who have made this marriage.' Alas! I was far from comprehending the true sense of these words. Our marriage had taken place at eleven o'clock; we immediately got into the carriage, attended by my maid and the old valet de chambre of M. d'Harville. We travelled so rapidly that we were to arrive at Paris before ten o'clock at night. * * *

You comprehend then, monseigneur, the feelings with which I returned to Paris, to that city where my mother had died scarcely a year before. We arrived at the Hotel d'Harville."

The emotion of the young woman was redoubled; her cheeks were covered with a burning red, and she added, in a heart-rending tone,

"It is necessary that you should know all; if not, I should appear to you to be too despicable. Well," continued she, with desperate resolution, "I was conducted to my apartment—I was left alone—M. d'Harville rejoined me. Notwithstanding his protestations of tenderness, I wept bitterly. But soon my husband seized my arm with a force sufficient to break it, uttering a dreadful cry. I tried in vain to escape from his iron grasp. I implored his pity—he heard me no longer; his face was contracted with the most violent convulsions; his eyes rolled in their orbits with a rapidity that paralyzed me; his contorted mouth was filled with a bloody foam; his hand still held me fast; I made one more effort; his stiffened fingers at length released their grasp, and I fainted, while M. d'Harville was still struggling in the paroxysms of this frightful attack. Such was my 'nuit de nocces,' monseigneur. Such was the vengeance of Madame Roland." "Unfortunate woman!" said Rodolphe, quite overcome. "I comprehend—epilepsy. Ah! it is frightful."

"And this is not all," added Clémence. "Oh fatal night, forever accursed. My child, the poor little angel, has inherited this fearful malady!" "Your child also! How?" "Her pailor—her weakness! It is this, mon Dieu! it is this; and the physicians think that the disease is incurable, because it is hereditary."

Madame d'Harville concealed her face in her hands; overcome by this mournful story, she had not the strength to utter a word.

Rodolphe also remained silent.

CHAPTER V.

CHARITY.

RODOLPHE blamed M. d'Harville much, but he promised himself to endeavour to excuse him in the eyes of Clémence, although well convinced, after her sad revelations, that the marquis was forever alienated from her heart.

Thought succeeding thought, he said to himself, "From duty, I have kept myself away

from a woman I loved, and who, perhaps, has for me a secret 'penchant.' Either from the unoccupied state of her thoughts or from commiseration, she has just escaped the loss of honour and life for a fool whom she thought unhappy. If, instead of absenting myself from her, I had surrounded her with the attentions of love and respect, my reserve would have been such that her reputation would not have received the slightest stain; the suspicions of her husband would never have been awakened, while at this moment she is almost at the mercy of the silliness of M. Charles Robert, and he will be, I fear, so much the more indiscreet as he has the less reason to be. And, besides, who knows now if, notwithstanding the perils she has run, the heart of Madame d'Harville will rest always unoccupied? All return towards her husband is henceforth impossible. Young, handsome, with a character sympathizing with all who suffer for her, what dangers! what obstacles! For M. d'Harville, what anguish, what sorrow! What a fate is his!"

Clémence, leaning on her hand, her eyes wet with tears, her cheeks burning with confusion, avoided the looks of Rodolphe, so much had this revelation cost her.

"Ah, now," said Rodolphe, "I comprehend the cause of the sadness of M. d'Harville, a sadness I could not penetrate. I comprehend his regret—" "His regret!" cried Clémence; "say rather his remorse, monseigneur; for never has crime been more coolly meditated." "A crime, madame!" "And what is it, then, monseigneur, to bind to himself by indissoluble ties a young girl who confides in his honour, when he knows he is subject to a malady which inspires fear and disgust? What is it, then, to surely destine an unfortunate child to the same disease? What forced M. d'Harville to make two victims? A blind, insensate passion! No; he found my birth, my fortune, myself, convenient. He wished to make a suitable marriage, because a bachelor's life had become tiresome, without doubt." "Madame, pity at least!"

"Pity! Do you know who deserves my pity? It is my daughter. Poor victim of this odious union, how many nights, how many days have I passed near her! how many bitter tears have I shed over her mournful lot!"

"But her father suffers the same horrible fate!"

"But it is her father who has condemned her to a sickly infancy, to a withered childhood, and, if she lives, to a life of retirement and sorrow; for she shall never marry. Oh, no! I love her too well to expose her some day to weep over her infant as I weep over her. I have suffered too much from this treason to render me culpable, or an accomplice of a similar act!"

"Oh! you are right; the vengeance of your stepmother is horrible. Patience! perhaps, in your turn, you will be revenged!" said Rodolphe.

"What do you mean to say, monseigneur?" asked Clémence, astonished at the inflection of his voice.

"I have almost always had the happiness to see punished, oh! cruelly punished, the wicked that I have known," added he, in a tone that made Clémence tremble. "But the next morning, what did your husband say?" "He avow-

ed, with strange nabvetsé, that the families to whom he was about to be united had discovered the secret of his malady, and broke the projected alliances. Thus, after having been twice repulsed, he has again—oh, this is too infamous! And yet, he is what is called in society a man of honour and probity!"

"You, always so good, you are cruel!"

"I am cruel, because I have been shamefully deceived. M. d'Harville knew I was kind, why did he not at once address himself to my kindness in telling me the truth?"

"You would have refused him." "That would condemn him, monseigneur; his conduct was unworthy if he felt this fear." "But he loved you!"

"If he loved me, should he have sacrificed me to his egotism? Mon Dieu! I was so tormented, I was so anxious to leave my father's home, that if he had been frank, perhaps he would have touched me by the picture of his sufferings, of the solitude to which a fearful and fatal malady had consigned him. Yes, seeing him so upright, so unhappy, perhaps I should not have had the courage to refuse him; and, if I had thus taken the sacred engagement to submit to the consequences of my devotion, I should valiantly have kept my promise; but to compel my interest and pity, by first placing me in his power, and to require this interest, this pity, in the name of my duty as a wife—he who has betrayed his duties as an honest man—it is at once wicked and cowardly! Now, monseigneur, judge of my life! judge of my cruel deceptions! I had faith in the honesty of M. d'Harville, and he has most unworthily deceived me. His sad and timid melancholy had interested me, and this melancholy, which he said was caused by pious recollection, was only the consciousness of his incurable infirmity." "But, in fine, was he a stranger, your enemy, the sight of his sufferings ought to soften your anger; your heart is noble and generous."

"But can I calm these sufferings! If my voice could be heard, if a grateful look could reply to my attentions! But no! oh! you do not know, my lord, how frightful it is to see a man tear himself like a wild beast, notice nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing, and only come out of this phrensy to fall into a kind of fearful dejection. When my daughter has one of these attacks, I am almost wild; my mind is distracted. I kiss, weeping, her poor little arms, stiffened by the convulsions which destroy her. But she is my child—my child! and when I see her suffer thus, I curse a thousand times more her father. When the spasms are over, my irritation against my husband becomes less; then—yes—then I pity him; to my aversion succeeds a sentiment of sad commiseration. But, in fine, have I married at seventeen only to experience these alternations of hatred and sorrowful commiseration! to weep over an unfortunate child, who I shall, perhaps, not preserve!"

"I cannot express to you, madame, how much your story has affected me; from the death of your mother until the birth of your daughter, how many devouring sorrows, how many troubles were concealed! You, so brilliant, so much admired, envied!"

"Oh! believe, monseigneur, when one suffers

certain troubles, it is sad to hear it said, 'How happy she is!'"

"Is it not? Nothing is more painful; well, you are not the only one who suffers from the cruel contrast of what is, and what appears to be." "How, monseigneur?"

"In the eyes of everybody, your husband must appear still more happy than you are, since he possesses you; and yet is he not also much to be pitied! Can there be a more unfortunate life than his? His wrongs towards you are great; but he is frightfully punished. He loves you as you merit to be loved, and he knows you can only entertain for him an insurmountable repugnance. In his suffering, sickly child, he sees a constant reproach. This is not all, jealousy also comes to torture him."

"And how can I help that, monseigneur?"

"Give him no cause to be jealous?" "So be it; but because my heart belongs to no one, will it belong the more to him? He knows it cannot be so. Since the frightful scene that I have related to you, we live separate; but in the eyes of the world I have for him all the regard that 'convenience' commands, and I have told to no one, except yourself, monseigneur, a word of this fatal secret." "And I assure you, madame, that if the service I have rendered you merited a recompense, I believe myself a thousand times repaid by your confidence; but since you wish to ask my advice, and that you will allow me to speak frankly to you—" "Oh! I entreat you, monseigneur."

"Let me tell you, that from not employing one of your most precious qualities, you lose great enjoyments, which not only would satisfy the wants of your heart, but would divert you from your domestic sorrows, and would respond to this want of lively, poignant emotions, and I dare almost add (pardon my bad opinion of women), to that natural taste for mystery and intrigue, which has so much empire over them."

"What do you mean to say, monseigneur?"

"I wish to say that if you would amuse yourself in doing good, nothing would please you, could interest you more."

Madame d'Harville regarded Rodolphe with astonishment. "And you must comprehend," continued he, "that I do not speak of your sending carelessly, almost with disdain, your bounty to the unfortunate whom you do not know, and who often are not worthy of your bounty. But if you would amuse yourself like me, in playing from one time to another 'à la Providence,' you would acknowledge that certain good deeds have often all the interest of a romance." "I have never thought, monseigneur, of this manner of dignifying charity as an amusement," said Clemence, smiling in her turn.

"It is a discovery that I owe to my regard for all that is 'ennuyeux'; a regard with which I have often been inspired, above all, after a conference with my ministers. But to return to our amusing benefactions: I have not, alas! the virtue of those disinterested persons who confide to others the charge of bestowing their alms. If it was only in agitation to send one of my chamberlains to carry some hundreds of 'louis' to each arrondissement of Paris, I avow to my shame, that I take no great pleasure in the thing; while to do good as I understand it, there is nothing in the world more amusing. I

hold to this word, because that for me it says all; that which pleases, everything that charms, everything that is attractive; and truly, madame, if you will become my assistant in some mysterious intrigues of this nature, you will see, I repeat, that, setting aside the nobleness of action, often nothing is more curious, more attractive, more pleasing, sometimes even more diverting, than these charitable adventures; and, besides, how many manœuvres to conceal your benefactions, how many precautions necessary to prevent your being known! how many different and powerful emotions, at the sight of poor and honest people who weep with joy at seeing you!" "Mon Dieu!" "Hold! the emotions of which I speak are about the same as you felt this morning in going to the Rue du Temple; simply clad, so as not to be remarked, you would also leave your house with your heart palpitating; you would also, inquiet and troubled get into a modest hack, the curtains of which you would let down so as not to be remarked; and then, also, casting your eyes from side to side for fear of being surprised, you would enter stealthily into some house of wretched appearance, just as you did this morning—I tell you, the only difference is, that you said to yourself; 'If I am discovered, I am lost;' and that you would say in this case, 'If I am discovered, I shall be blessed!' But, as you are modest concerning your own good qualities, you would employ all your cunning not to be blessed."

"Ah! monseigneur," cried Madame d'Harville, weeping, you save me! I cannot tell you the new ideas, the consoling hopes that your words awaken in me. You say truly, that to busy one's heart and mind to make ones' self adored by those who suffer, is almost to love." What do I say? it is better than to love. When I compare the existence that I have a glimpse of, that to which a shameful error might have led me, the reproaches which I address to myself become still more bitter.

"I should be much afflicted," said Rodolphe, smiling, "for my whole desire is to aid you to forget the past, and to prove to you only that the opportunities for diversion of the mind are numerous. The means of good and evil are often the same; the end alone differs. In a word, if the good is as attracting, as amusing, as the evil, why prefer the latter? I am going to make a very vulgar comparison * * * * *

"It is perhaps too true, monseigneur," said Madame d'Harville, smiling. "Well! what say you? will you agree that we shall contrive together all sorts of benevolent enterprises; *charitable dissipations*, of which, as always, very good people shall be the subjects? We will have our rendezvous, our correspondence, our secrets, and, above all, we will conceal all from the marquis; finally, if you agree, we will be in lawful intrigue."

"I accept with joy, with gratitude, this association, monseigneur," said Clémence, gayly; "and to commence our romance, I will return to-morrow to these unfortunates, to whom this morning I could only give words of consolation; for, profiting by my trouble and affright, a little lame boy stole the purse you gave me. Ah! monseigneur," added Clémence, and her face lost its expression of sweet playfulness which

had for a moment animated it, "if you knew what misery, what a horrible picture! No, no; I did not believe that such unfortunates existed. I blame myself, and accuse my destiny." Rodolphe, not wishing Madame d'Harville to see how much he was touched at this return to herself, which proved the beauty of her mind, answered gayly, "If you will permit it, I will except the Morels from our partnership; you must let me take charge of these poor people, and you will promise me, above all, not to return to that house, for I live there."

"You, monseigneur? What pleasantry!"

"Nothing more serious. A modest lodging, it is true; two hundred francs a year, besides six francs for my housekeeping, freely granted each month to the portière, Madame Pipelet, the horrible old woman that you know; add to this, that I have for my neighbour the prettiest grisette of the 'quartier' of the Temple, M^{lle}. Rigolette, and you will agree that for a 'commis marchand,' who earns eighteen hundred francs (I pass for a clerk), it is quite suitable."

"Your presence, so unhopd for in this fatal mansion, proves that you speak seriously, monseigneur. Some generous action attracts you there, doubtless; but for what good work do you reserve me, then? what part do you destine for me?"

"That of an angel of consolation, and, excuse the villanous word, a demon of cunning and address; for there are certain delicate and grievous wounds that the hand of a woman alone can dress and cure: thus it is with some unhappy beings, so proud, so gloomy, so mysterious, that it needs a rare penetration to discover them—an irresistible charm to acquire their confidence." "And when can I display this penetration, this address you suppose I possess?" asked Madame d'Harville, impatiently. "Soon, I hope; you will have a conquest to make worthy of yourself, but it will be necessary to employ your most 'machievéliques' resources."

"And what day, monseigneur, will you confide to me this great secret?"

"Do you see, you are now at the rendezvous? Can you do me the favour to receive me in four days?" "So late!" said Clémence, naively. "And the mysteries? and the 'convenience?' Judge, then! if we are thought to be accomplices, they will be afraid of us; but perhaps I shall have need to write you. Who is this old woman who brought me your letter to-night?" "An ancient femme de chambre of my mother—surety and discretion itself." "It is, then, to her I will address my letters: she will hand them to you. If you have the goodness to answer me, direct, 'Monsieur Rodolphe, Rue Plumet.' Your femme de chambre will put your letters in the postoffice." "I will put them in myself, monseigneur, as I take my usual walk." "Do you often go out alone, and on foot?" "When the weather is fine, almost every day." "Really! It is a custom which every woman should follow. But shall I not see M. d'Harville to-night?"

"No, monseigneur; the scene of this morning has so much affected him, that he is suffering," said the marquise, in a low tone. "Ah! I comprehend," answered Rodolphe, sadly; "come, come, courage! Your life wanted an

aim; your sorrows a palliative, as you said. Leave me to believe that you will find this relief in the future, of which I have spoken to you; then your soul will be filled, so filled with sweet consolations, that resentment against your husband will perhaps, no longer find a place. You will feel for him some of the interest that you have for your child. And as to this little angel, now that I know the cause of its malady, dare I almost tell you to hope a little."

"Can it be possible, monseigneur? and how?" cried Clémence, clasping her hands with gratitude.

"I have for my ordinary physician a man quite unknown, but very learned: he lived for a long time in America. I remember that he has spoken to me of two or three cures, almost marvellous, made by him of slaves afflicted with the same disease." "Ah! monseigneur, can disappointment be possible!"

"Take care not to hope too much: the deception would be too cruel: only let us not altogether despair." "What do I not owe you, monseigneur!" said Clémence, in a faltering tone; "you relieve me; you make me, in spite of myself, hope for my child; you point out to me a future which will be at once a consolation, a pleasure, and a reward. Was I not right when I wrote you that, if you would come here to-night, you would finish the day as you commenced it—by a good action."

"And add at least, madame, one of those good actions as I like them, in my egotism—full of attraction, pleasure, and charms," said Rodolphe, rising; for half past eleven had just struck. "Adieu, monseigneur; do not forget to give me news soon of these poor people in the Rue du Temple."

"I will see them to-morrow morning; for I had, unfortunately, forgotten that this little cripple had stolen your purse, and these poor creatures may be in a sad extremity. In four days, do not to forget it, I will come and explain to you the part you have to play. I only now have to tell you that a disguise will perhaps be necessary."

"A disguise! Oh! what joy! and which, monseigneur?" "I cannot tell you yet. I will leave you the choice."

CHAPTER VI.

MISERY.

THE reader has doubtless not forgotten that an unfortunate family, the head of which, a journeyman jeweller named Morel, occupied the garret of the house in the Rue du Temple.

We will conduct him to this sad abode.

It is five o'clock in the morning. Without, the silence is profound, the night dark and frosty: it snows.

A candle, sustained by two sticks of wood on a little square plank, hardly pierces with its yellow flickering light, the darkness of the garret; a narrow nook, ceiled by the sloping roof, which forms with the floor a very acute angle. The greenish tiles were everywhere visible. The partitions were plastered with mortar, blackened by time, and covered with cracks and rents, through which could be seen the worm-eaten laths: a door off its hinges showed

the way to the staircase. The floor, of a colour without a name, tainted, sticky, is covered here and there with bits of decayed straw, with old rags, and with those large bones which the poor buy of the most wretched retailers of rotten meat, to know the cartilages which may yet adhere to them.

Such frightful disorder always announces either misconduct or honest misery, but so desperate, so overwhelming, that the man, annihilated, degraded, feels no more the will, nor strength, nor need, to get rid of it; he crouches there like a beast in his den. During the day, this hole is lighted by a narrow oblong window, made in the roof, with a glazed sash, which opens and shuts on a hinge. At the time of which we speak, a thick coating of snow covered this window.

On the table, which was covered with stains of grease and tallow, shone and sparkled a handful of diamonds and rubies of the finest water. Morel was a workman in real, and not false stones, as he said, and as they thought in the house. Thanks to this innocent deception, the stones which were confided to him seemed of such small value, that he could keep them with him without fear of their being stolen.

So much riches placed at the mercy of so much misery! we will not speak of the probity of Morel.

Seated on a stool without a back, overcome by fatigue, by cold, by sleep, after a long winter's night passed in labour, the jeweller has let fall on the table his weary head, his benumbed arms; his face touches the grindstone, which is placed horizontally on the table, and ordinarily put in motion by a little wheel turned by hand; a saw of fine steel, and some other utensils, are scattered around: the artisan, of whom one only sees the bald head, surrounded by gray hair, is dressed in an old coat of coarse net, which he wears next to his skin, and a wretched pair of cotton trowsers; his list slippers, in tatters, scarcely cover his feet, blue with cold.

There reigns in this garret a cold so intense, so penetrating, that the artisan, notwithstanding the kind of sleep into which he is plunged from exhaustion, shivers at times from head to foot.

The length of unsnuffed candle-wick announces that Morel has slept for some time; his oppressed respiration is alone heard; for the other six inhabitants of this garret are not asleep.

Yes, in this narrow garret live seven persons.

Five children, the youngest four years of age, the eldest hardly twelve; and then their infirm mother; and then a woman of fourscore—the mother of their mother—an idiot.

Except the father of the family, a moment overcome because his strength is exhausted, no one sleeps: no, because cold, hunger, sickness, keep their eyes open—wide open.

One does not know how rare and precious sleep is for the poor, in which they recruit their strength and forget their sorrows. They awake so joyful, so refreshed, so much recruited for their labours, after one of these beneficent nights, that the least religious, in the catholic sense of the word, feel a vague sense

of gratitude, if not towards God, at least towards sleep—and he who blesses the effect, blesses the cause. On beholding the frightful misery of this artisan, compared with the value of the stones which have been confided to him, one is struck with one of those contrasts, which at once depress and elevate the soul.

Ever under the eyes of this man is the cruel spectacle of the sufferings of his family; everything overwhelms them, from hunger to idiocy; and he respects those jewels, of which a single one would snatch his wife, his children from the privations which slowly kill them. Without doubt, he does his duty as an honest man; but because this duty is simple, its accomplishment is not less praiseworthy—less to be admired! Do not the circumstances under which a duty is performed, render the practice still more meritorious? And, besides, this artisan, remaining so unfortunate, so honest, with this treasure in his possession, does he not represent the immense and formidable majority of men, who, forever destined to privations, but peaceable, industrious, and resigned, see every day, without hatred, and without bitter envy, glittering before their eyes the magnificence of riches? Is it not, in fine, noble, consoling, to think that it is not force, it is not terror, but a good sense of morality, which alone constrains the mighty popular ocean, whose waves might engulf society entire, in its power casting aside the laws; like a stormy sea, bursting and breaking down the strongest dikes and ramparts.

But to return to this specimen, alas! too real, of frightful poverty and misery, which we shall endeavour to describe in all its frightful nudity. The jeweller possessed but one thin mattress and a piece of covering, which were devoted to the use of the idiotic grandmother, who, in her stupid and ferocious wilfulness, would not share her wretched bed with any one.

At the beginning of winter she had become furious, and had almost stifled the youngest of the children, who had been placed alongside of her—a little girl of four years, afflicted for some time with phthisis, and who suffered too much from the cold in the straw where she had slept with her brothers and sisters.

Such is the picture, complete, which the garret of the artisan presented, when the eye could pierce the gloom where the faint rays of the candle expired. Against the transverse wall, as it is less damp than the other parts of the 'mansarde,' is placed the bed of the idiot. As she can keep nothing on her head, her gray hair, cut very close, shows the form of her flattened skull; by her heavy gray eyebrows shade her cavernous eyes, which shine with savage brilliancy; her hollow cheeks, livid, marked with a thousand wrinkles, cling, as it were, to her toothless gums; lying on her side, doubled up, her chin almost touches her knees; she shivers under a covering of gray woollen, too small to cover her entirely, and which discovers her bony legs and the lower part of an old garment in tatters with which she is clothed.

At a little distance from the resting-place of the grandmother is spread out the straw bed which serves for the five children, and in this manner: two incisions were made in the ticking, one at each end; then the children are slip-

ped into the damp and musty straw; the ticking serves both for blanket and coverlid. Two little girls, one of whom is dangerously sick, huddle together in one end, three little boys in the other.

They are all dressed, if some miserable rags can be called clothing. Their flaxen hair, all uncombed and tangled, which their mother allows to grow, because it is some protection from the cold, half covers their pale, attenuated faces. One of the boys, with his stiffened fingers, draws to his chin the ticking to cover himself the better; the other, fearing to expose his hands to the cold, holds the end between his chattering teeth; the third one presses closely to his two brothers.

The second of the two girls, sinking under the phthisis, reclines languidly her poor little face, already of a bluish and morbid lividity, on the icy bosom of her sister of five years, who tries in vain to warm her between her arms and the straw with anxious solicitude. On another straw bed is stretched out the wife of the artisan groaning, exhausted by a slow fever, and by a painful infirmity which has prevented her from rising for some months.

Madeleine Morel is thirty-six years of age. An old blue cotton handkerchief, tied around her head, glaringly sets forth the bilious colour of her bony face. Her eyes are surrounded by deep brown circles; the blood flows from her chapped and feverish lips. Weak, feeble, with no energy, she had remained honest because her husband was honest; left to herself, poverty would have overcome and driven her to crime. She loved her husband and her children; but she had neither the courage nor the strength to restrain her complaints on their common misfortunes. The jeweller was often obliged, although his labour alone supported the family, to leave his work to console the poor valetudinarian. Under a wretched covering of coarse cotton, which was spread over his wife, Morel had placed some clothes so old and ragged that the pawnbrokers had refused to receive them. A furnace, a stove, and a cracked earthen pot, two or three cups, a bucket, a washing machine, a stone jug, placed under the angle of the roof near the disjointed door, which the wind shakes at each moment, is the whole property of this family. This desolate scene is lighted by the candle whose flame, agitated by the wind which whistles through the crevices of the roof, now casts its pale and flickering light on so much misery, and now illuminates with a thousand fires the diamonds and rubies exposed on the workbench of the sleeping artisan. With an involuntary movement, the eyes of these miserable beings—all awake, all quiet, from the grandmother to the youngest child—are fixed instinctively on the jeweller, their only hope, their only resource. In their selfishness, they are troubled to see him thus inactive, thus overcome by labour. The mother thought of her children; the children thought of themselves.

The idiot appeared to think of nothing. Yet suddenly she sat up, covered her bosom with her long yellow arms, looked at the light with winking, then rose softly, dragging after her, like a winding sheet, her ragged covering. She was very tall; her shaved head appeared proportionally small; her under lip moved with a

spasmodic movement; she advanced cautiously towards the work-table, like a child about to commit a misdeed. When she was near the candle, she held to the flame her two trembling hands; their thinness was such that the light shone through them, giving a sort of livid transparency.

Madeleine Morel followed from her bed the smallest movements of the old woman; she, continuing to warm her hands at the flame of the candle, looked down, and appeared to examine with imbecile curiosity the rubies and diamonds which sparkled on the table.

Absorbed in this contemplation, the idiot burned her hands in the candle—she uttered a hoarse cry.

At this noise, Morel awoke with a start, and quickly raised his head. He was about forty years of age, with a fine, open, intelligent face, but wrinkled—faded by poverty; an unshaved gray beard of many weeks' growth covered the lower part of his face, which was marked with the smallpox; his inflamed eyelids were red from the effect of his midnight vigils.

Awakening with a start, the jeweller found himself face to face with the idiot. "What is the matter! what do you want, mother?" said Morel; then he added in a low tone, fearing to awaken his family, whom he thought asleep:

"Go to sleep, mother—don't make any noise; Madeleine and the children are asleep." "I am not asleep—I am trying to warm Adèle," said the eldest of the little girls. "I am too hungry to sleep," said one of the boys; "it was not my turn to sup last night as my brothers did with Madame Rigolette." "Poor children," said Morel; "I thought that you were asleep, at least."

"I was afraid to wake you, Morel," said his wife, "otherwise I would have asked for some water; I am very thirsty; I have the fever on me." "Right away," answered the workman; "only I must first get your mother to bed—come, leave my jewels alone," said he to the old woman, who wished to take a large ruby, the sparkling of which had attracted her attention. "Come, go to bed, mother," repeated he. "This, this!" answered the idiot, showing the precious stone she coveted.

"I shall be angry," said Morel, raising his voice, to frighten the old woman, whose hand he softly repulsed. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Morel, how thirsty I am: come, give me some drink." "But how do you think I can do it? I cannot leave your mother with the jewels—she may lose another diamond as she did a year ago—and God knows, God knows what it has cost us—this diamond—and what, perhaps, it will yet cost us!" "Felix, since you are not asleep, go and give some drink to your mother." "No, no, I will wait: he will take cold," answered Madeleine.

"I shall be no colder without the straw than within," said the child, getting up. "Ah now, come, come! will you stop," cried Morel, in a threatening tone, to drive away the idiot, who persisted in her endeavours to get hold of one of the stones.

"Mamma, the water is frozen in the jug," cried Felix.

"Break the ice then," said Madeleine.

"It is too thick—I cannot." "Morel, do break the ice," said Madeleine in an impatient tone, "since I have nothing else to drink: do not leave me to die of thirst." "Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what patience; but how can I do it? I have your mother in hand," cried the unhappy workman. He could not compel her to retire to her bed, and beginning to be irritated at the resistance she met with, she uttered a sort of angry growl. "Call her then," said Morel to his wife; "sometimes she will listen to you."

"Mother, go to bed; if you are good, I will give you some coffee, that you like so much." "This, this!" answered the idiot, seeking this time to get possession of the coveted jewel by force. Morel kept her off with management, but in vain. "Mon Dieu! you know well enough that you will never control her without the whip," cried Madeleine; "it is the only way to make her quiet." "Yes, it must be; but although she is foolish—to threaten an old woman with a whip is revolting to me," said Morel.

Then addressing the old idiot, who tried to bite him, and whom he held back with one hand, he cried in a loud voice, "Take care of the whip! if you don't go to bed at once!" These threats were all in vain. He took a whip from under his work-bench, cracked it violently, and said, shaking it at the old woman, "Go to bed at once, go to bed!"

At the noise of the whip, the old idiot started quickly away from the table, then stopped, grumbled, and cast angry looks at her son-in-law.

"To bed, to bed!" repeated he, advancing and snapping the whip anew. Then the idiot regained her couch backward, and shaking her fist at the jeweller.

He, desirous of terminating this cruel scene, to give his wife drink, advanced very close to the idiot, and again snapped his whip loudly, saying, "To bed immediately!"

The old woman, in her fright, began to utter dreadful howls, threw herself on her couch, like a dog in his kennel, without ceasing to howl.

The frightened children, thinking that their father had struck the old idiot, cried, weeping, "Don't beat grandmother, don't beat her!"

It is impossible to describe the effect of this dismal scene, accompanied by the supplicating cries of the children, the furious howlings of the idiot, and the low complaints of the artisan's wife.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEST.

MOREL had often been present at similar scenes, quite as sad as those we have related; yet he cried, in a fit of despair, throwing his whip on the table,

"Oh! what a life! what a life!"

"Is it my fault, mine, if my mother is an idiot?" said Madeleine, weeping. "Is it mine?" asked Morel. "What do I ask? To kill myself with work for you all—day and night I am to work—I do not complain—as long as I have strength, I will go on; but I cannot work at my

ade, and be at the same time nurse for the crazy, the sick, and children! No; Heaven is not just, in fine—no, it is not just! It is too much misery for a single man," said the jeweller, in a heart-rending tone; and, quite overcome, he fell on his stool, his face concealed in his hands. "Since they would not take my other in the hospital, because she was not mad enough, what do you wish me to do, me there? When you torment yourself with that you cannot help, what good does it do?" "None," said the artisan, and he wiped a tear from his eye—"none, you are right; but when everything overwhelms, one is sometimes no longer his own master." "Oh! mon Dieu, on Dieu, I am so thirsty, I shiver, yet the fever burns me," said Madeleine. "Wait, I will give you some drink."

Morel went to get the jug under the roof. After having, with some difficulty, broken the ice which covered the water, he filled a cup with this frozen liquid and approached the bed. His wife, who eagerly stretched out her impatient hands. But after a moment's reflection, she said to her, "No, this is too cold while the fever is on; it will do you harm." "It will do me harm! so much the better; give me quickly, then," answered Madeleine, bitterly, "it will be much the sooner finished; it will disembarass you of me. You will then only have to take care of the fool and the children. The clock will be wanting one less." "Why do you speak so to me, Madeleine? I do not deserve it," said Morel, sadly. "Stop, do not grieve me, for I have only just strength enough left to work. My head is not very strong; it cannot stand it; and then what will become of you and your children! it is for you and them I speak; if it only concerned myself, to-morrow would settle all my troubles. Thank God, the river flows for every one! Poor Morel!" said Madeleine, weeping; "it is true, I was wrong to say what I did. Never mind; my intention was good; as, for, in fine, I am useless to you and our children; for sixteen months I am confined to my bed. Oh mon Dieu! I am so thirsty; I beg you, give me to drink!" "Directly, I am going to warm it in my hands." "How kind you are! and I could say such harsh things to you!"

"Poor woman, you suffer, and that quickens my temper; say anything you please to me, but don't say you wish to leave me." "But for what am I good? What use is our children to me? To overwhelm you with work."

"Doubtless! thus, thanks to you all, I find strength enough to labour sometimes twenty hours a day; even to becoming crooked and deformed. Do you believe that, except on this account, I would, for the love of myself alone, perform this work? Oh! no, life has no charms enough for me; I'd soon put a finish to it."

"Just so I think," answered Madeleine; "except for the children, I should have said to you long since, Morel, you have had enough, so have I; light a pan of charcoal, we will laugh at poverty. But these children! these children!" "You see they are good for something," said Morel, with admirable naïveté. "Come, drink out a small swallow at the time, for it is still cold." "Oh! thank you, Morel," said Madeleine, drinking with avidity. "Enough, enough."

It was too cold; my ague increases," said Madeleine, returning the cup. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I told you so; you suffer." "I have no longer the strength to tremble. It seems to me I am surrounded on all sides with ice." Morel took off his waistcoat, put it on the feet of his wife, and remained with his shoulders naked. The unfortunate man had no shirt. "But you will freeze, Morel!" "If I am too cold, I will put on my waistcoat directly." "Poor man! ah! you are right; Heaven is not just. What have we done that we should be so wretched? while others—" "All have their troubles, the great as well as the small." "Yes, but the great have troubles which do not empty their stomachs, and which do not make them tremble with cold." "Hold, when I think that with the price of one of those diamonds we could have what would allow us to live comfortably, it is revolting; and what good do they do, these diamonds? If we only said, what good do they do to others, you must go a good way. It is as if you said, what good does it do the gentleman, whom Madame Pipelet calls the commandant, to have hired and furnished the first story of this house, when he never comes? What good does it do him to have those good mattresses and blankets, since he lodges elsewhere?" "It is true, there is enough there for poor people like us to live on for a long time; without reckoning that Madam Pipelet makes a fire there every day to prevent the furniture from being injured by the damp. So much good heat lost; while we, and our children, freeze. But, you will say to me, We are not furniture. Oh! these rich! it is too hard!"

"No harder than others, Madeleine. But they don't know, do you see, what misery is. They are born happy, live happy, die happy; why should they think of us? and besides, I tell you, they don't know. How can they have an idea of the privations of others? Are they very hungry? great is their joy, they can only dine the better. Is it very cold? so much the better, they call it a fine frost; it is very plain: if they walk out, they return to the corner of a fine fireside, and the cold makes them find the fire comfortable; they cannot, then, pity us much, since to them hunger and cold contributes to their pleasure. They don't know, do you see, they don't know! We, in their places, would act as they do." "Poor people are, then, better than them all, since they keep one another. This good little Mlle. Rigolette, who has so often watched over me and the children, took Jerome and Pierre with her last night to partake of her supper. And her supper is only a cup of milk and some bread. At her age one has a good appetite; she must have deprived herself."

"Poor girl! yes, she is very kind. And why? because she knows what sorrow is. And as I say always, If the rich only knew!—if they knew!" "And this little lady who came to us yesterday with such an alarmed look, to ask us if we needed anything; now, she knows what it is to be unfortunate—well! why don't she return?" "She will return, perhaps; for she had a charitable and sweet expression." "Oh! with you, if one is only rich, they are always right. One would say that the rich were made of another kind of clay than the poor!"

"I do not say that," answered Morel, gently.

"I say, on the contrary, they have their defects: we have ours. The misery is, that they don't know. The evil is, again, that there are many agents to discover the beggars who have committed crimes, and that there are none to seek out the honest workman and his family, sinking under the weight of poverty, and who, for want of a little timely assistance, sometimes are led into temptation. It is right to punish evil; but perhaps it would be better to prevent it. You may remain honest until you are fifty; but extreme want and poverty may cause you to do wrong, and here is one rogue the more; while that if one had known—but why think of this? The world is just as it is. I am poor and desperate—I speak thus. Were I rich, I would talk of fêtes and pleasures. Well, poor wife! how do you feel now?" "Just the same—my legs are lifeless. But you are shivering; take your waistcoat, and blow out the candle, it is daylight." In fact, a dim light, glancing with difficulty through the snow which covered the window, began to display the interior of this wretched dwelling-place, and rendered its aspect still more frightful. The shades of night had concealed at least a part of its horrors.

"I am going to wait until it is light enough for me to recommence my work," said the artisan, seating himself on the edge of the straw-bed, and leaning his face on his hands. After a few moments' silence, Madeleine said to him, "When will Madame Mathieu come to get the stones you are now working on?" "This morning. I have only the face of one of the false diamonds to polish." "A false diamond! you who only cut precious stones, notwithstanding what they believe in the house!" "How! you don't know!—ah! true, when Madame Mathieu came the other day you were asleep. She gave me ten false diamonds, ten Rhine flint stones to cut, just of the same size, same manner, and same number of the fine stones she brought; those which are there with the rubies. I have never seen diamonds of a finer water; those ten stones are worth at least sixty thousand francs." "And why does she wish you to imitate them with the false stones?" "A great lady, to whom they belong—a duchess, I believe—has ordered M. Baudoin the jeweller to sell her set, and to have a false one made to replace it. Madame Mathieu, the broker in jewelry of M. Baudoin, told me this when she brought me the work, so that I could imitate them exactly. Madame Mathieu has given the same orders to four other workmen, for there are forty or fifty pieces to cut. I could not do them all; they must be all ready this morning, to give M. Baudoin time to see them. Madame Mathieu said, that the great ladies often, in secret, had their diamonds replaced by false ones."

"You see, then, that false stones produce the same effect as the true ones, and that the great ladies who wear these only for ornament, would never have the idea to sacrifice a diamond to succour such as we are." "Poor wife! be reasonable; sorrow makes you unjust; who is it that knows that we, the Morels, are unhappy?" "Oh! what a man! what a man! If they were to cut you into pieces, you would say, 'I thank you.'" Morel shrugged his shoulders with emotion. "How much does Madame Mathieu owe you this morning?" asked

Madeleine. "Nothing; since I am in advance already one hundred and twenty francs."

"Nothing! and we finished yesterday's last twenty sous!" "Yes," said Morel in mournful tone. "And what are we going to do?" "I don't know." "And the baker will not give us any more credit." "No; and yesterday I borrowed half a loaf from Madame Pipelet."

"Will Mother Burette lend us anything?" "Lend us! Now that she has all our things in pawn, on what would she lend us? on children!" said Morel, with a bitter smile. "But my mother, the children, and you, you have only eaten a pound and a half of bread among the whole of you, yesterday. You must not die of hunger! and it is your fault: you would not be enrolled this year at the almshouse."

"Those only are enrolled who have furniture and we have none. We are looked upon as boarders."

"But what shall we do, then?" "Perhaps this little lady, who came yesterday, will remember."

"Yes; reckon on it: but Madame Mathieu will lend you five francs. You have worked for her for ten years, she cannot leave in such a situation an honest workman, with such a family." "I do not think she will be able to lend us anything. She has done all she could to advance me, little by little, this hundred and twenty francs. It is a large sum for her. Because she is a broker in diamonds, and that she has sometimes fifty thousand francs worth in her box, she is no richer for it. When she earns a hundred francs a month, she is well satisfied, for she has expenses also—two need to bring up. Five francs for her, do you see, is like five francs for us; and there are times when one hasn't them—you well know. Being already much in advance with me, she can hardly take the bread out of her own mouth."

"Now you see what it is to work for a baker instead of working for the rich jeweller: they are less exacting sometimes: but you will always let yourself be eaten with the wool upon your back. It is your fault."

"It is my fault!" cried the unhappy man, exasperated by this absurd reproach; "is it your mother or not who is the cause of all our misery? If I had not been obliged to pay for the diamond she lost, we should be in advance; we should have had the value of my labour; we should have the eleven hundred francs that we drew out of the savings bank to add to the thirteen hundred that M. Jacques Ferrand lent us, whom God curse!" "You won't ask anything from him. After all, he is a miser; but that's nothing; you can but try."

"To him! him—ask him!" cried Morel; "I prefer to roast before a slow fire. Hold! don't speak of that man, you'll drive me mad." Saying these words, the countenance of the artisan, ordinarily sweet and resigned, assumed an energetic expression; his pale face became slightly coloured, he arose quickly from the bench where he was seated, and walked the garret with great agitation. Notwithstanding his frail, deformed figure, the attitude, the features of the man expressed profound indignation. "I a

not wicked," cried he. "In my life I have never harmed any one; but, look here, this notary! * oh! I wish him as much harm as he has caused me." Then, putting his hands on his head, he murmured, in a sorrowing tone, "Mon Dieu! why, then, does an unhappy lot, which I have not merited, deliver me and mine, hands and feet tied, to this hypocrite? Shall he have, then, the right to use his riches to ruin, corrupt, and destroy all whom he wishes to ruin, corrupt, and destroy!"

"That's it, that's it, said Madeleine—"set yourself against him; you will be well advanced when he has put you in prison, as he can do from one day to another, for this note of thirteen hundred francs, for which he has a judgment against you these three months; he has you like a bird at the end of a string: I also detest this notary; but since we are in his power, we must—" "Let him dishonour our daughter—is it not?" cried the artisan in a voice of thunder. "Bon Dieu! be quiet then, these children are awake: they hear you." "Bah! bah! so much the better, it will be a good example for our two little girls; it will prepare them; some day he may have the notion; are we not in his power? as you say; come, say again he can put me in prison; come, speak frankly, we must abandon our child to him, is it not so?"

Then bursting into tears, he cried, "Oh! my children, my poor children, my Louise! my good and pretty Louise! too handsome, too handsome—it is from this that all our misfortunes come; if she had never been so handsome, this man would not have proposed to lend me this money. I am industrious and honest; the jeweller would have given me time; I should have been under no obligation to the monster, and he could not have abused the service he has rendered us, to try to dishonour my daughter; I would not have left her a day with him—but it must be so, it must be so—he has me in his power. Oh! poverty, poverty, how many outrages you compel one to swallow!" "But what could we do! He told Louise, 'If you leave my house, I will send your father to prison.'" "Yes, he speaks to her as if she was the vilest of creation." "If it was only that, it would be enough; but if she leaves him, he will send you to prison, and then what will become of us?" "If Louise earned twenty francs a month in another place, could we live upon that alone?" "Yes, it is to live that we let him, perhaps, dishonour Louise." "You always exaggerate: the notary pursues her, it is true, she has told us; but she is virtuous, you know it well."

"Oh! yes, she is virtuous, and active, and good! When this diamond was lost, and that, seeing us in trouble, she wished to go to service to lessen our expenses, did I not tell you how much it cost me? She a servant, ill treated, humiliated! she—naturally so proud, that in joking—do you remember it! we joked then, we called her the princess, because she said often that with neatness she would make one poor dwelling like a little palace." "Dear child! it

* The reader will recollect that Fleur de Marie had, when a child, been confided to the care of this notary, and that his housekeeper had abandoned the child to La Chouette, who agreed to take her for the sum of one thousand francs.

would have been my pride to have kept her with us, even if I had worked all night. It is that also, when I saw her sweet face and her pretty black eyes before me, near my workbench, and I heard her sing, my task appeared less heavy! Poor Louise! so industrious, and withal, so gay! Even to your mother, who would do just as she wished—and you, what care she took of you! how she amused you! she found time to do everything; thus, with Louise, all our happiness, all is gone." "Stop! Morel, do not recal this to my mind, you break my heart," said Madeleine, weeping bitter tears. "And when I think that perhaps this old monster—Hold, do you see, at this thought my brain turns! I feel that I must go and kill him, and then myself afterward." "And us, what will become of us? And besides, once more you exaggerate; the notary may have said this to Louise as a joke; besides, he goes to mass every Sunday; he visits many friends; there are many persons who say it is safer to place money with him than in the Saving's Bank." "What does that prove? that he is rich and a hypocrite. I know Louise well; she is virtuous. Yes; but she loves us as one seldom loves; her heart bleeds at our misery; she knows that without me you would all die with hunger; and if the notary has threatened to put me in prison, the poor creature has been capable—oh! my head! I shall become mad.*****

"Well! and why do you fear that?" "I fear, because I have remarked that for three months, every time that Louise comes here, and she embraces me, she blushes." "With pleasure at seeing you." "Or with shame—she becomes every day more sad." "Because she sees us every day more wretched; and besides, when I speak to her of the notary, she says that now he no longer threatens her with the prison for you.***** And when one thinks," she continued, "that with one of the diamonds which are there on your bench, you could reimburse the notary, take our daughter away from him, and keep her at home!"—"When you have said this to me a hundred times, what good does it do! Certainly if I were rich, I should not be poor," answered Morel rather impatiently.

Probity was so natural, and, thus to say, so organic in this man, that he did not imagine that his wife, worn out, exhausted by misfortune, could entertain an idea of tempting his honesty. He continued, bitterly: "We must be resigned. Happy those who can have their children around them and protect them from evil; but a daughter of the poor, who can watch her? No one. Is she old enough to earn anything? She goes to her work in the morning, returns at night; during this time the mother attends to her work, the father to his. Time is our fortune, and bread is so dear, that we have not the leisure to watch over the conduct of our children; and yet the world cries out at the misconduct of poor girls, as if their parents had the means to keep them at home, or the time to watch over them when they are abroad. The privations we suffer are nothing in comparison to our sorrow in leaving our wife, our children, our parents. It is, above all, to us that a family life would be salutary and consoling. Yet, as soon as our children are old enough, we are obliged to part with them!"

At this moment some one knocked loudly at the door of the garret.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE JUDGMENT.

Much astonished, the artisan went and opened it. Two men entered into the garret. The one, tall and thin, with a base and pimpled face, surrounded by thick black and gray whiskers, held in his hand a large, leaded cane, wore a hat out of shape, a long, dirty, green surtout, closely buttoned. From its rusty collar of black velvet stuck out a long red neck, scaled like that of a vulture. This man was called Malicorne.

The other, much smaller, but of equally low appearance, red-haired, stout and short, was dressed in a kind of ridiculous sumptuousness. Diamond buttons confined the bosom of his shirt of doubtful purity, and a long chain of gold was suspended over a waistcoat of some faded Scotch stuff; over all he wore a paletot, of a yellowish gray. This man was called Bourdin. "Oh! it smells of poverty and death here!" said Malicorne, stopping at the door. "The truth is, it don't smell of musk: what devices!" answered Bourdin, with a gesture of disgust and contempt; then he advanced towards the artisan, who regarded him with as much surprise as indignation. Through the half-opened door could be seen the cunning, wicked face of Tortillard, who, having followed these unknown, looked, spied, listened. "What do you want?" asked the artisan. "Jérôme Morel," answered Bourdin, "I am he." "Journeyman jeweller?" "I am he." "Very sure?" "Once more, I am he. You make me angry. What do you want? Explain, or go out." "That's polite! thank you. I say, Malicorne, there's no *fat* here; it's not as it is at the Viscount de Saint Rémy—" "Hold!" said Morel, with indignation; "if you were not drunk, as you appear to be, I should be angry. Leave my room this moment!" "Ah, ah! ain't he droll, the *ramshorn*," cried Bourdin, making an insulting allusion to the deformed figure of the artisan. "I say, Malicorne, he has the impudence to call this his *room*—a hole where I would not put my dog!" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Madeleine, so much alarmed, that until then she had not uttered a word. "Call for help; perhaps they are robbers—take care of your diamonds."

Seeing these two unknown approaching nearer and nearer to his work-bench, Morel feared some evil design, ran to the table, and with his hands covered the precious stones. Tortillard, still on the watch, heard the words of Madeleine, remarked the movement of the artisan, and said to himself, "Ah, ah! they called him a workman in false stones; if they were false, he would not fear their being stolen. Just as well to know: then Mother Mathieu, who comes here so often, is also, then, a broker of real stones. The diamonds she has in her box are real. Just as well to know: I'll tell that to La Chouette, La Chouette," said the son of Brasseur, chanting.

"If you do not leave my room, I'll call the guard," said Morel. The children, frightened

at this scene, began to weep, and the old idiot rose up in bed. "If any one has the right to call for the guard, it is us—do you hear, monsieur le déjeté!" said Bourdin. "As the guard must assist us to conduct you if you kick," added Malicorne; "we have not a justice of the peace with us, it is true; but if you insist upon his society, we will serve him up fresh from his bed piping hot, boiling. Bourdin, go and bring him." "In prison—I?" cried Morel, in a stupor. "Yes, to Clichy." "To Clichy?" repeated the artisan, with a haggard air. "Ain't he dull of comprehension, this man?" said Malicorne. "To prison for debt; do you like that better?" added Bourdin. "You—you—are—how—the notary. Ah! mon Dieu!" and the workman as pale as death, fell back on his bench, unable to add a word.

"We are officers—do you understand?" "Morel!—the note of the master of Louise! we are lost!" cried Madeleine, in a piercing tone. "Here is the judgment," said Malicorne, drawing from his portfolio a stamped act.

After having sung through his nose, as usual a part of the deed, in a voice almost unintelligible, he articulated clearly the last words, unfortunately too significant for the artisan:

"Judgment in last resort; the tribunal condemns the Sieur Jerome Morel to pay to the Sieur Jacques Ferrand, by all lawful means, and even by his body, the sum of thirteen hundred francs, with interest from date of protest, he also to pay the costs.

"Ordered and judged at Paris, this 13th September, 1838."

"And Louise, then—and Louise?" cried Morel, almost wild, without appearing to understand this conjuring, "where is she? Has she left the notary, since he wishes to imprison me? Louise—my God! what has become of her?" "Who is Louise?" said Bourdin.

"Leave him, then," continued Malicorne brutally; "don't you see he is fooling you? Come!" and he drew near to Morel—"come to the left, march; forward, march; I want some fresh air; it is poisonous here." "Morel don't go. Defend yourself," cried Madeleine wildly. "Kill the scoundrels. Oh! you are a coward! You will let them take you away you will abandon us!" "Do as if you were a home, madame," said Bourdin, in a sardonic manner; "but if your man raises his hand to me, I'll knock him down." Solely absorbed about Louise, Morel heard nothing that was said around him. Suddenly, an expression of bitter joy illumined his face: he cried, "Louise has left the house of the notary; I will go to prison cheerfully." But casting a look around him, he said, "And my wife—and her mother—and my other children—who will feed them? They will not give me jewels to work in prison—they will think my misconduct has sent me there. It is, then, our death—the death of all of us, that he desires—the notary." "Once twice! shall we finish?" said Bourdin; "we are tired; finally, dress yourself, and march!" "My good gentlemen, pardon what I said just now!" cried Madeleine. "You will not have the heart to take away Morel. What do you think will become of me and my five children and my mother, who is foolish? There—do you see her there! she is crazy, my good gentlemen! she is crazy!"

"The old woman with the shaved head! Hold! it is true—she is shaved," said Malicorne; "I thought she had a white scull-cap." "My children, throw yourselves at the knees of these good gentlemen," cried Madeleine, wishing, by a last effort, to soften the officers; "pray them not to take away your father, our sole support."

Notwithstanding the order of their mother, the children wept, not daring to leave their resting-place. At this unaccustomed noise, at the sight of the men whom she did not know, the idiot began to howl, pressing against the wall.

"Ah, now! 'mille tonnerres,' will this finish?" cried Malicorne. "Do you think we are feasting here! Come, march! or I'll make you!" He placed his hand on the shoulder of the artisan, and shook him roughly. This menace, this gesture, inspired great terror among the children; the three little boys got out of their straw-bed, half naked, and came, weeping, to cast themselves at the feet of the officers, clasping their hands, and crying in a heart-rending tone, "Pardon! don't kill our father!" At the sight of three unfortunate children, shivering with cold and fright, Bourdin, notwithstanding his natural hardness of heart, and his being accustomed to such scenes, felt himself touched. His comrade, unfeeling, brutally disengaged his leg from the embraces of the children, saying, "Eh! get out, then, brats! what a dog's trade, if we always had to do with such beggars!"

A horrible episode renders this scene still more frightful. The eldest of the little girls, who had remained in the straw-bed with her sick sister, suddenly cried out, "Mamma, mamma, I don't know what is the matter with her—Adèle—she is all cold! She looks at me, but she don't breathe." The poor sick child had just expired without a groan, her eyes still fixed on her sister, whom she loved tenderly. It is impossible to describe the cry that was uttered by the wife of the artisan at this revelation, for she comprehended all. It was one of those convulsive, heaving cries, torn from the very bowels of a mother. "My sister looks as if she was dead! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I am afraid!" cried the child, rushing out of the bed, and running to throw herself into the arms of her mother. She, forgetting that her almost paralyzed limbs could not sustain her, made a violent effort to get up, and go to her dead child; but her strength failed her, and she fell on the floor, uttering a last cry of despair. This found an echo in the heart of Morel; he aroused himself from his stupor: with a bound he was at the bedside, and caught up his child. He found her dead.

Cold and hunger had hastened her end, although her complaint, the fruit of misery, was mortal. Her poor little limbs were already stiff and frozen.

CHAPTER IX.

LOUISE.

MOREL, with his gray hair erect from despair and fright, remained immovable, holding his

dead child in his arms. He regarded her with a dry eye, fixed and red. "Morel, Morel! give me my Adèle!" cried the unhappy mother, stretching out her arms towards her husband. "It is not true! no; she is not dead—you will see. I am going to warm her." The curiosity of the idiot was excited by the endeavours of the officers to get hold of the artisan, who would not be separated from the body of his child. The old woman ceased to howl, arose from her couch, drew near slowly, thrust her hideous head over the shoulder of Morel, and for some moments looked at the corpse of her grandchild.

Her features preserved their habitual expression of stupidity; at the end of a moment, she uttered a sort of deep, unearthly howl, like that of a famished beast; then, returning to her bed, she threw herself on it, crying, "Hunger! hunger!" "You see, gentlemen, a poor little girl of four years, Adèle. She is called Adèle. I kissed her last night and this morning—and now see her! Perhaps you will say it is one mouth less to feed, and that I am fortunate; is it not so?" said the artisan, with a haggard look.—His reason began to be shaken under so many shocks.

"Morel, I want my child; I want her!" cried Madeleine.

"It is true; each in turn," answered the artisan; and he placed the child in the arms of its mother. She, not less wandering than her husband, concealed in the straw of her bed the body of her child, hiding it from all eyes with a kind of savage jealousy; while the other children, kneeling, burst into sobs.

The officers, for a moment overcome by the scene, soon recovered their usual brutality of manner. "Ah, now! come, comrade," said Malicorne; "your child is dead; it is a misfortune; we are all mortal; we can do nothing, neither can you. You must follow us; we have yet another individual to catch, for game abounds to-day!"

Morel did not hear this man. Completely lost in thought, he said, "We must, however, put my little child in a shroud; watch her here, until they come to take her away. A shroud! but how? we have nothing! And the coffin! who will trust us? Oh! a coffin so small! a child only four years old! it ought not to be dear; and, besides, no hearse! it can be taken under the arm. Ah! ah! ah!" added he, with a shout of fearful laughter, "how happy I am! she might have died at eighteen, at Louise's age, and they would not have given me credit for a large coffin."

"Ah, now! but this fellow is capable of going crazy," said Bourdin to Malicorne; "he makes one feel afraid. Come, good! and the old idiot howling with hunger! what a family!" "Yet we must make a finish; although the arrest of this beggar is only tariffed at 76 francs, 75 centimes, we'll increase the amount, as is right, to 240 or 250 francs. It is the wolf who pays." "Who advances? for it is that fellow there who pays for the fiddles, since it is he who is going to dance." "When he has enough to pay his creditor 2500 francs for capital, interest, expenses, and all, it will be warm weather."

"Then it won't be as it is here, for it freezes," said the man, blowing on his fingers. "Let us finish this; tie him; he shall weep on

the road. Is it our fault, ours, if the little one is dead?"

"Such folks ought not to have children; come, come, comrade," added he, striking Morel on the shoulder, "we can wait no longer; since you can't pay—to prison!" "To prison, M. Morel!" cried a young and sweet voice; and a youthful girl, a brunette, fresh and rosy, entered quickly into the garret. "Ah, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said one of the children, "you are so good! Save papa; they wish to take him to prison, and our little sister is dead."

"Adele is dead!" cried the young girl, whose large black eyes became filled with tears. "Your father in prison! that cannot be!" And, irremovable, she, in turn, looked at the artisan, his wife, and the officers.

Bourdin approached Rigolette. "Come, my good girl, you who are cool and collected, make this good man listen to reason; his little child is dead, very well! but he must follow us to Clichy—to prison, for debt. We are constables." "It is true, then?" cried the young girl. "Very true! the mother has the little one in bed, we cannot take it from her; it takes her attention. The father ought to profit by this, to be off." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what misfortune!" cried Rigolette: "what misfortune! what can be done?" "Pay or go to prison; there's no alternative. Have you two or three thousand to lend them?" asked Malicorne, in a jeering manner. "If you have, go to your strong box and turn out the cash; we ask nothing better." "Ah! it is frightful," said Rigolette, with indignation—"to dare to joke before such misery!"

"Well, without joking," said the other bailiff, "since you wish to do some good, try to prevent the woman from seeing us carry off the husband. You will prevent both from spending a bad quarter of an hour." Although brutal, the advice was good; Rigolette followed it, and, approached Madeleine. She, wild with grief, did not observe the young girl, who knelt down alongside of the bed with the other children. Morel recovered from his temporary alienation only to sink under the most poignant reflections. More calm, he was able to contemplate the horror of his position. Decided to this extremity, the notary must be unrelenting; the bailiffs did their duty. The artisan gave himself up. "Ah! now are we coming to the end," said Bourdin to him. "I cannot leave these diamonds here; my wife is half crazy," said Morel, showing the precious stones on his table. "The broker for whom I work will come to get them this morning, they are very valuable." "Good," said Tortillard, who still remained outside listening; "good, good, good—La Chouette shall know this."

"Grant me only until to-morrow," continued Morel, "so that I can return these diamonds to the broker." "Impossible! let us finish at once." "But I cannot, in leaving these diamonds, expose them to being lost." "Take them with you; our hack is below—we will go to your broker; if he is not at home, you can leave them at the office at Clichy; they will be as safe there as in the bank. Come, make haste, we will go without your wife and children perceiving it." "Grant me until to-morrow, so that I can bury my child," asked Morel, in a supplicating tone, almost choked with tears.

"No; we have already lost more than an hour here." "The funeral would only make you more sad," added Malicorne. "Ah! yes; it would make me more sad," said Morel, bitterly. "You fear so much to make people sad! then, a last word." "Come, sacrebleu! make haste," said Malicorne, with brutal impatience. "How long since you were ordered to arrest me?" "It was only yesterday that we received the order from the notary." "Yesterday! So lately! yesterday! and Louise has not been here: where is she? what has become of her?" said the artisan, taking from the workbench a box filled with cotton, in which he placed the stones. "But I will not think of this now—in prison I'll have time enough."

"Come, make up your bundle and dress yourself."

"I have no bundle to make; I have only these diamonds to carry with me, to leave at the office." "Dress yourself, then!" "I have no other clothes than these." "You are going out in these rags!" said Bourdin. "I shall make you ashamed, doubtless!" said the workman, with bitterness. "No, since you go in your carriage," answered Malicorne. "Papa, mamma calls you," said one of the children. "Listen," whispered Morel quickly to one of the bailiffs: "do not be inhuman; grant me a last favour. I have not the courage to say farewell to my wife, to my children; my heart will break. If they see you take me away, they will run after me. I wish to avoid that. I beg you will say to me out loud, that you will return in three or four days, and pretend to go away—you will wait for me at the landing below. I will come out five minutes afterward; that will spare me the parting. I will not resist, I assure you; I shall become crazy—I was almost so just now." "No you don't; you wish to play me a trick!" said Malicorne; "you wish to escape, old fellow." "Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Morel, in mournful indignation. "I don't think that he'll fail," whispered Bourdin to his companion: "let us do as he asks, otherwise we will never get from here; I'll go and watch at the door; there is no other way of getting out; he cannot escape us."

"Very well, but may thunder catch him! what a kennel! what a kennel!" Then, addressing Morel in a low tone, he said, "It is agreed upon; we will wait for you below: play your game, and make haste!" "I thank you," said Morel. "Well, well!" cried Bourdin in a loud tone, "since it is so, and you promise to pay, we will leave you; we will return in five or six days: but you must be punctual then!" "Yes, gentlemen, I hope then to be able to pay," answered Morel.

The bailiffs went out; Tortillard, for fear of being surprised, had disappeared from the staircase at the moment the officers came out of the garret.

"Madame Morel, do you understand?" said Rigolette, addressing the wife of the artisan, to arouse her from her mournful contemplation: "they leave your husband quiet. These two men have gone." "Mamma, do you hear? they do not take papa away," cried the eldest of the boys. "Morel! listen—listen—take one of your large diamonds, they will not know it, and we are saved," murmured Madeleine, quite

delirious: "our little Adèle will be no longer cold, she will be no longer dead."

Profiting by a moment when they were not looking at him, the artisan went out with precipitation. The bailiff awaited him without, on a kind of little platform, at the head of the landing-place. On this platform opened the door of a small closet, where M. Pipelet kept his stock of leather. Besides, as we have said, the worthy porter called this place his "box at the melo-drama," because, by means of a hole he had made in the wainscot, he could witness the sad scenes which took place in the garret.

The bailiff had remarked this door; for an instant he thought that perhaps his prisoner had reckoned on this place to fly to, or conceal himself. "Come, let us be moving!" said he, putting his foot on the first step of the staircase, and making a sign for Morel to follow him. "One minute more, for mercy's sake!" said the artisan. He knelt on the platform; through one of the chinks of the door he cast a last look on his family, joined his hands, and said in a touching tone, weeping bitter tears, "Farewell! my poor children, farewell! my poor wife, farewell!" "Ah, now! will you finish your anthems?" said Bourdin, brutally: "Malicorne was right; what a kennel!"

Morel arose; he was about to follow the bailiff when these words resounded on the staircase, "My father! my father!"

"Louise!" cried the artisan, lifting his hands towards heaven; "I can, then, embrace her before I go!" "Thanks, mon Dieu! I arrive in time," said the voice, drawing nearer and nearer. And one could hear the young girl ascending the staircase. "Be tranquil, my dear," said a third voice, sharp, broken-winded, puffing and blowing, coming from a place lower down. "I'll hide myself, if it is necessary, in the alley: us three, my broom and my old darling, and if they don't walk out of this after you have spoken to them—the beggars!" The reader has, doubtless, recognised Madame Pipelet, who, less active than Louise, followed her slowly.

In a few moments, the daughter of the artisan was in the arms of her father. "It is you, Louise! my dear Louise!" said Morel, weeping: "but how pale you are! Mon Dieu! what is the matter." "Nothing—nothing," answered Louise, confusedly; "I have run so fast! here is the money."

"How!" "You are free!" "You know, then?" "Yes, yes; here, sir, take the money," said the young girl, giving a rouleau of gold to Malicorne. "But this money, Louise! this money!" "You shall know all; be calm; come and pacify my mother." "No, directly!" cried Morel, placing himself before the door. He thought of the death of his little girl, of which Louise was ignorant: "Stop, I must speak to you. But this money?" "Minute!" said Malicorne, having counted the pieces of gold which he put in his pocket. "Sixty-four, sixty-five, that makes thirteen hundred francs. Is that all you have, my little woman?" "But you only owe thirteen hundred francs!" said Louise, inquiringly, to her father. "Yes," said Morel. "Minute!" answered the bailiff; "the note is for thirteen hundred francs; good;

here is the note paid, but the costs, without the arrest, is already eleven hundred and forty francs."

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Louise: "I thought it was only thirteen hundred francs. But, sir, a little later we will pay you the rest; here is a large amount on account, is it not, my father?" "Later—very well: bring the money to the office, and we will let your father go. Come, march!"

"You take him away!" "Straight off. It is on account—let him pay the rest, and he shall be free. Go on, Bourdin; push ahead!" "Mercy, mercy!" cried Louise. "Ah! what a row! now the whinings are to begin again; it is enough to make one sweat in mid-winter—my word of honour!" said the bailiff, brutally. Then advancing towards Morel, "If you don't walk right off, I'll take you by the collar, and make you go another fashion; this is too tiresome, and there's an end of it." "Oh! my poor father—I, who thought to save him, at least!" said Louise, quite overcome.

"No! no! God is not just!" cried the artisan, in a despairing tone. "Yes, God is just: he always has pity on honest people who suffer," said a soft and thrilling voice.

At the same moment Rodolphe appeared at the door of the little store-room, where he had witnessed many of the scenes we have just described. He was pale, and highly affected. At this sudden apparition, the bailiffs fell back. Morel and his daughter regarded the prince with astonishment.

Taking from the pocket of his waistcoat a little package of bank bills folded, Rodolphe drew out three, and, presenting them to Malicorne, said, "There are twenty-five hundred francs; return to this young girl the gold she gave you." Still more astonished, the officer took the notes in a hesitating manner, examined them, turned, and returned, and finally pocketed them. Then recovering his impudence and assurance, as his astonishment vanished, he measured Rodolphe with a look, and said, "Are they good, your bills? how came you by such a sum? Does it honestly belong to you?" added he. Rodolphe was very plainly dressed, and covered with dust, owing to his concealment in the store-room of M. Pipelet. "I told you to give back the gold to this young girl," answered he, in a short and rough tone.

"I told you! and how do you dare to speak to me thus?" cried the bailiff, advancing towards Rodolphe, in a threatening manner.

"The gold! the gold!" said the prince, seizing and pressing his arm so tightly, that under his iron grasp, the bailiff cried out, "Oh! you hurt me! let me go!" "Give up the gold, then! you are paid; go away, without uttering a word of insolence, or I'll pitch you head foremost down the stairs!" "Well! here is the gold," said Malicorne, returning the rouleau to the young girl; "but don't be so familiar, nor injure me, because you are the strongest."

"That's true; who are you, that you give yourself such airs!" said Bourdin, standing behind his confederates; "who are you?" "Who is he? impudence! he is my lodger, the prince of lodgers, foulmouth as you are!" cried

Madame Pipelet, who at last appeared, quite out of breath, and as usual "coiffée" with her flaxen periwig "à la Titus." The portière held in her hand an earthen saucepan filled with smoking soup, which she charitably brought to the Morels.

"What does she want, this old weasel!" said Bourdin. "If you make any remarks about my appearance, I'll throw myself on you, and bite," cried Madame Pipelet; "and then my lodger, my prince of lodgers, will pitch you from the top to the bottom of the stairs, as he said he would; and I'll sweep you out with my broom, like dirty rubbish as you are."

"This old woman is capable of raising the house against us. We are paid, we have made our expenses, let us go," said Bourdin to Malicorne. "There are your pieces!" said he, throwing the documents at the feet of Morel. "Pick them up, you are paid to be polite," said Rodolphe, stopping the bailiff with a strong grasp, and pointing to the papers.

Feeling, at this new and formidable grasp, that he could not struggle against such an adversary, the officer stooped down, grumbling, and picked up the papers, which he handed to Morel.

"You, although you have a fist of iron, had better not fall under our hands!" said Malicorne; and after shaking his clinched hand at Rodolphe, with one bound he descended ten steps, followed by his accomplice, who looked behind, rather alarmed. Madame Pipelet prepared herself to avenge the threat of the bailiff towards Rodolphe; looking at her saucepan with an inspired air, she cried, heroically, "The debts of the Morels are paid; they are going to have enough to eat; they have no longer any need of my paste: look out below!" and leaning on the railing, the old woman emptied the contents of her saucepan on the backs of the two bailiffs, who had reached at this moment the first story. "And get out, then!" added the portière. "Ah! they are nicely soured—like a piper—like two pipers—eh! eh! eh! oh!—must say so." "Ten thousand thunders!" cried Malicorne, inundated with the culinary preparation of Madame Pipelet, "will you look out above there, old hell-cat!"

"Alfred!" shouted Madame Pipelet, screeching in a sharp, piercing voice, loud enough to make a deaf man hear; "Alfred! fetch them a kick, old darling! They wished to come the Bédouins over your Stasia (Anastasia). They are two blackguards—they have ransacked me—clap 'em behind with the broom—ask the eysterman and 'rogomiste' to help you! Heu! you! you! you! s'cat! s'cat! thieves! murder! Kss! kss! kss! Brrrrrr! How, how! Kick 'em behind! old darling!!! Boum! boum!!" And, by way of a formidable finish to these "onomatopœias," which she had accompanied with most ferocious stampings of the feet, Madame Pipelet, carried away by the intoxication of victory, pitched from the top to the bottom of the stairs her earthen saucepan, which, breaking with a terrible noise, at the moment when the bailiffs, alarmed at these frightful cries, descended by four steps at the time the last flight of stairs, augmented considerably their fears. "And, get out then!" cried Ana-

stasia, shouting with laughter, and crossing her arms in a triumphal attitude.

While Madame Pipelet pursued the bailiffs with her shouts and insults, Morel cast himself at the feet of Rodolphe. "Ah! monsieur, you have saved our lives! To whom do we owe this unlooked-for succour?" "To God; you see he has always pity on honest people."

CHAPTER X.

RIGOLETTE.

LOUISE, the daughter of the artisan, was remarkably handsome, a serious beauty; tall and slender, she resembled the antique Juno, in the regularity of her features, and the huntress Diana in the elegance of her lofty figure. Notwithstanding her sunburnt complexion, the rough redness of her well shaped hand, and her humble dress, this young girl, in her exterior was commanding—as the poor artisan would say in his paternal admiration, she had the air of a princess. We will not endeavour to paint the gratitude the joyous transport of this family, so suddenly relieved from a frightful fate. For a moment, in this joyful reverse, even the death of the little girl was forgotten. Rodolphe alone remarked the extreme pallor of Louise, and the sombre thoughts with which she appeared overwhelmed, notwithstanding the deliverance of her father.

Wishing to tranquillize the Morels completely as to the future, and to explain a liberality which might compromise his incognito, Rodolphe said to the artisan, whom he led to the landing place whilst Rigollette prepared Louise for the death of her little sister—

"The day before yesterday, in the morning, a young lady came to see you?" "Yes, sir; and she appeared much grieved at the state in which she found us." "After God, it is she you must thank, not me." "Can it be true, monsieur? this young lady—" "Is your benefactress." "I have often taken goods to her house; the other day in coming to hire a room on the fourth story, I learned from the porter your cruel situation; counting on the charity of this lady, I went to her house; soon she was here to judge for herself of the extent of your sufferings; she was much affected; but as this might have been the fruits of misconduct, she told me to get every information concerning you, desiring to conform her benefactions according to your probity." "Good and excellent lady! I had much reason to say—" "To say to Madeleine, if the rich only knew! is it not so?" "How, monsieur, you know the name of my wife? Who has told you that."

"Since six o'clock this morning," said Rodolphe, "I have been concealed in the little storeroom near your garret."

"You, monsieur?" "And I have heard all, all, excellent and honest man!" "Mon Dieu! But how came you there?" "For good or bad, I could not be better informed than from your own mouth; I wanted to see and hear everything without your knowing it. The porter had spoken to me of this storeroom, proposing to let me have it for a storeroom. This morning I asked to visit it, I remained there an hour, and I have convinced myself that there is not a character more upright, more noble, more courageously resigned than yours."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, there is no great merit in it—I am born so, and I cannot, therefore, do otherwise."

"I know it; and if I do not praise you, still I esteem you." I was coming out of my covert to deliver you from the bailiffs, when I heard the voice of your daughter. I wished to allow her the pleasure of saving you. Unfortunately, the cupidity of these officers prevented this sweet satisfaction from poor Louise; then I appeared. I had recovered yesterday some sums that were due to me, and I have only made an advance to your benefactress in paying this unhappy debt. But your misfortunes have been so great, you have been so honest, so worthy, that the interest that is felt for you will not stop here. I can, in the name of your angel benefactress, promise you a peaceful, happy future, for you and yours." "Can it be possible? But, at least, her name, monsieur, her name? this angel from heaven, this angel benefactress, as you call her?" "Yes, she is an angel; and you have great reason to say that both high and low have their troubles." "Is this lady unhappy?" "Who has not their sorrows? But I have no reason to conceal her name; she is called—"

Thinking that Madame Pipelet was not ignorant that Madame d'Harville had come into the house to ask for the Commandant, Rodolphe, fearing the indiscreet twattle of the portière, said, after a moment's reflection, "I will tell you the name of this lady, on one condition." "Oh! speak, monsieur!" "It is, that you repeat it to no one: you understand? to no one." "Oh! I swear to you. But may I not at least thank her, this Providence of the unfortunate?"

"I will ask Madame d'Harville; I do not doubt but that she'll consent."

"This lady is called—" "Madame la Marquis d'Harville."

"Oh! I shall never forget that name. She shall be my saint—my adoration. When I think that, thanks to her, my wife, my children are saved—saved! not all—not all—my poor little Adèle, we shall never see her again! Alas! mon Dieu! we must acknowledge that we must soon have lost her, that she was condemned." And the artisan dried his tears. "As to the last duties to render to this little one, if you will believe me, this is what you must do. I do not occupy my room; it is large and airy; there is already one bed there; what is necessary shall be brought there for you and your family; you must move there; the body of your child can remain in the garret, where it will be this night, guarded and watched by a priest. I will go and beg Monsieur Pipelet to attend to these sad details."

"But, monsieur, to deprive you of your room! too much trouble. Now that we are quiet, and I have no longer any fear of a prison, our poor garret will appear like a palace; above all, if my Louise remains with us." "Your Louise shall leave you no more. You said it would be your luxury to have her always with you. This shall be better—it shall be your recompense."

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, is this possible? it seems like a dream. I have never been religious, but such an event—help so providential—it must make one believe!" "Believe always: what is it that you risk?" "It is true," answered Morel, naively; "what do we risk?" "If the grief of a parent can admit of a compensation, I would say to you, that one of your daughters is taken away, but the other is returned to

you." "It is true, monsieur; we have our Louise now." "You accept my room, is it not so? otherwise, how arrange for this sad watching of the dead? Think, then, of your wife, whose head is so weak—to leave under her eyes for twenty-four hours so touching a spectacle."

"You think of everything—everything! How kind you are, monsieur!"

"It is your angel benefactress you must thank; her goodness inspires me. I say to you what she would say—she will approve, I am sure. Thus you accept, it is agreed upon. Now tell me—this Jacques Ferrand?" A dark shade passed over the face of Morel.

"This Jacques Ferrand," said Rodolphe, "is the same Jacques Ferrand who lives in the Rue du Sentier?"

"Yes, monsieur; do you know him?" Then, assailed anew by his fears on the subject of Louise, he cried, "Since you heard what I said just now, monsieur, say—say, have I any right to expect anything from this man? and who knows if my child—my Louise—"

He could not finish, and concealed his face in his hands.

Rodolphe understood his fears. "The conduct of this notary," said he, "ought to warn you; he no doubt has caused you to be arrested to revenge himself on your daughter; besides, I have reason to believe him a very dishonest man. If it is so," said he after a moment's pause, "let us count on Providence to punish him."

"He is very rich, and a great hypocrite, monsieur!"

"You were very poor and very desperate! did Providence fail you?" "Oh! no, monsieur—grand Dieu! do not think I say this from ingratitude." "A guardian angel is come to you—an inexorable avenger awaits, perhaps, the notary—if he is culpable." At this moment Rigolette came out of the garret wiping her eyes. Rodolphe said to the young girl, "Is it not so, my neighbour, that M. Morel would do well to occupy my room with his family while he is waiting for his benefactor, of whom I am the agent, to procure suitable lodgings?"

Rigolette looked at Rodolphe with astonishment.

"How, monsieur—you be so generous?"

"Yes, but on one condition—which depends on you, my neighbour."

"Oh! all that depends upon me—" "I have some very pressing accounts to regulate for my employer; they will be sent for shortly. My papers are below. If, as a neighbour, you will allow me to occupy myself with this work in your room, on a corner of your table, while you shall go on with yours, I will not incommode you; and the Morel family can, right away, with the aid of Monsieur and Madame Pipelet, establish themselves in my quarters." "Oh! if that's all, monsieur, most willingly; neighbours should assist each other. You set the example by what you do for this good M. Morel. At your service, monsieur." "Call me neighbour; otherwise I shan't like it; and I dare not accept," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Never mind that. I certainly can call you neighbour, since you are one." "Papa, mamma asks for you; come, come," said one of the little boys, coming out from the garret.

"Go, my dear Monsieur Morel; when all is ready below, you shall be informed." The ar-

tisan entered precipitately into his garret. "Now, neighbour," said Rodolphe to Rigolette, "you must do me another service." "With all my heart, if it is possible, my neighbour." "You are, I am sure, an excellent little housekeeper; I want to buy at once that which is necessary, so that the Morel family shall be suitably clothed, lodged, and settled in my room, where there is only my bachelor's furniture, which was brought in yesterday. How shall we manage to procure at once all that we need for the Morels?" Rigolette reflected for a moment, and answered, "Before two o'clock you shall have this: good clothes ready made, warm and clean; good white linen for all the family; two small beds for the children; one for the grandmother; in fine, everything that is wanted. But, par exemple, that will cost much, much money."

"And how much?" "Oh! at least—at least five or six hundred francs." "For the whole?" "Alas! yes. You see it is a good deal of money," said Rigolette, opening her large eyes, and shaking her head. "And we can have this?" "Before two o'clock!" "But you are a fairy, then, my neighbour?" "Mon Dieu! no; it is very plain. The Temple is only two steps from here, and you will find everything there you need." "The Temple?" "Yes, the Temple." "What is that?" "You don't know the Temple, neighbour?" "No, my neighbour." "Yet it is there that folks like you and me fix themselves off, when they are economical. It is much cheaper than elsewhere, and quite as good." "Really?" "I guess so; look here, I suppose—how much have you paid for your overcoat?" "I can't tell you exactly."

"How! neighbour, you don't know how much your coat cost?" "I acknowledge to you in confidence, my neighbour," said Rodolphe, smiling, "that I owe for it. Then, you can comprehend why I do not know." "Ah! my neighbour, my neighbour, I am afraid you do not keep your affairs in order!"

"Alas! no, my neighbour." "You must correct this, if you wish that we should be friends, and I see already we shall be so; you seem so good! You shall see that you will not be sorry that you have me for a neighbour. You shall help me—I will assist you—we are neighbours; it is on that account. I will take good care of your linen; you will help me to wax the floor of my chamber. I rise early; I will awaken you, so that you shall not be late to your shop; I will knock against the wainscot until you say to me, 'Good-morning, neighbour!'" "It is agreed: you shall awaken me; you shall have charge of my linen; and I will wax your chamber, and you will keep things in order?" "Certainly. And when you want to buy anything, you will go to the Temple; for here is an example: your coat cost you eighty francs, I suppose; well, you could have had it in the Temple for 30 francs." "But this is wonderful! Thus you think that, with five or six hundred francs, there poor Morel—" "Would be furnished with everything, and very well, and for a long time?" "My neighbour, an idea!" "Let us have the idea." "You are a judge of housekeeping articles?" "Why, yes—a little," said Rigolette, with a slight shade of vanity. "Take my arm, and let us go to the Temple, and buy what we want for these poor people. Are you agreed?" "Oh! what happiness! poor people! But the money?" "I have some." "Five hundred francs?"

"The benefactor of the Morels has given me

a 'carte blanche;' he will spare nothing, but that they shall be comfortable. If there is even a place where we can get better things than at the Temple—" "You can find nothing better nowhere; but, here, there is everything to be had, and ready made; little dresses for the children, and dresses for their mother." "Come, then, to the Temple, my neighbour." "Ah! mon Dieu! but—"

"What then?" "Nothing—it is that—do you see—my time—it is all I possess. I am already a little behindhand, in coming now and then to nurse the poor Madame Morel; and, you conceive, one hour here, and one hour there, that makes little by little a day: it is thirty sous; and when one makes nothing for one day, one must live for all that. But, bah! never mind; I'll make up for it at night; and then, do you see, parties of pleasure are very rare, and I'll make one of this! It will appear to me that I am rich, rich, rich, and that it is with my own money that I buy all these good things for the Morels. Well, come; give me time to put on my bonnet and shawl, and I am yours, neighbour." "If you have only these to put on, my neighbour, will you allow me to bring my papers in your room in the mean while?" "Willingly; then you can see my room," said Rigolette, proudly; "for my housekeeping is already done, which proves to you I am an early riser, and that, if you are a sleeper and lazy, so much the worse for you; I shall be a bad neighbour for you." And, light as a bird, Rigolette descended the staircase, followed by Rodolphe, who went into his own room to brush off the dust of the store-room of M. Pipelet. We will say directly why Rodolphe was not yet informed of the fate of poor Fleur de Marie, who had been carried off the previous evening from the Bouqueval Farm. We will also recall to the recollection of the reader, that Mlle. Rigolette alone knowing the new address of Francois Germain, the son of Madame Georges, Rodolphe had great interest to discover this important secret. The walk to the Temple, which he had proposed to the grisette, would make her acquainted and more confiding, and drive from his mind the gloomy thoughts that the death of the little girl had awakened in him.

The child which Rodolphe regretted so bitterly was about this age. It was, in effect, just at this age that Fleur de Marie had been delivered to La Chouette by the housekeeper of the notary, Jacques Ferrand. We will tell you by-and-by for what purpose, and under what circumstances.

Rodolphe, laden, to keep up appearances, with a formidable roll of papers, entered the chamber of Rigolette.

CHAPTER XI.

RIGOLETTE.

RIGOLETTE was about the same age as the Goualeuse, her ancient friend of the prison. There was between the two young girls the same difference as between a smile and a tear; between joyous thoughtlessness and melancholy musings; between the most careless forethought and a gloomy, incessant apprehension of the future; between a delicate, exquisite, lofty, poetical nature, painfully sensitive, incurably wounded by remorse, and a gay, lively, happy, active, unreflecting nature, although kind and obliging.

For, far from being egotistical, Rigolette had no sorrows but those of others; she sympathized with all her powers—devoted herself body and soul, to those who suffered—but thought no more about it when her back was turned. It is commonly said. Often she ceased from laughing to weep sincerely, and then she ceased from weeping to laugh again. A true child of Paris—preferred noise to solitude, movement to repose, the harsh and resounding harmony of the orchestra at the balls of the Chartreuse or of the Colysée to the soft murmur of the winds, the waters, and the foliage—the deafening noise of the streets of Paris to the solitude of the country—the glare of fireworks, the glitter of a ball, the noise of rockets, to the serenity of a fine night, with stars, and darkness, and silence. Alas! yes; the good girl frankly preferred the black mud of the streets of the capital to the verdure of the flowery meadows—its dirty or scorching pavements to fresh and velvet moss of the wood-paths perfumed with violets—the suffocating dust of the barriers or the Boulevards to the waving of golden corn, enamelled with the scarlet flowers of the wild poppy and azure of the blue-bells. Rigolette only left her room on Sundays—and each morning, to lay in her provision of chickweed, bread, milk, and hemp-seed, for herself and her two birds, as Madame Pipelet said; but she lived in Paris for Paris. She had been in despair to have lived elsewhere than in the capital.

Another anomaly: notwithstanding this taste for Parisian pleasures; notwithstanding the liberty, or, rather, the state of abandonment in which she found herself, being alone in the world; notwithstanding the rigid economy which she was obliged to use in her smallest expenses in order to live on thirty sous a day; notwithstanding the most "piquante," the most mischievous, the most adorable little face in the world, never did Rigolette choose a sweetheart (we will not say lover; the future will prove whether we must consider the conversation of Madame Pipelet, on the subject of the neighbours of Madame Rigolette, as calumnies or indiscretions). The grisette, let us say, only chose her sweethearts in her own class; that is to say, only chose her neighbours. * * * *

Some words concerning the figure of the grisette, and we will introduce Rodolphe into the chamber of his neighbour.

Rigolette was hardly eighteen, of a middling size, perhaps rather small, but so gracefully shaped, so finely modelled, so voluptuously turned, that her size responded well to her bearing, at once bold and modest; one inch more in height would have caused her to lose much of the gracious "ensemble;" the movement of her small feet, always irreproachably "chaussés" in gaiter boots of black cloth, with rather thick soles, recalled to mind the coquettish light and discreet step of a quail or a "bergeronette." She did not appear to walk, she merely touched the pavement; she slid rapidly on its surface. This walk, peculiar to grisettes, ought to be attributed, without doubt, to three causes: To their desire to be thought handsome; to their fear of an admiration "traduite" by a pantomime too expressive; to the desire that they always have to lose as little time as possible in their peregrinations.

Rodolphe had as yet only seen Rigolette in the sombre light of the garret; he was then dazzled with the extraordinary bloom of the young girl when he entered gently into a chamber light-

ed by two large windows. He remained for a moment immovable, struck with the beautiful picture which he had before his eyes.

Standing before a glass placed over the chimney-piece, Rigolette was tying under her chin the ribands of a little bonnet of embroidered "tulle," trimmed with a small bunch of cherry-coloured favours; this bonnet, placed very high behind, discovered two large and thick bands of shining hair, black as jet, falling very low on the forehead; her fine eyebrows seemed traced with ink, and overshadowed two large black eyes, sparkling and wicked; her full, plump cheeks were like velvet of the freshest carnation, fresh to the sight, fresh to the touch, like a rosy peach impregnated with the cold dew of the morning.

Her little turned-up nose, saucy and cunning, had made the fortune of a Lisette or a Marton; her mouth, slightly large, with lips of rose well moistened, and little, white, pearly teeth, was smiling and provoking; of three charming dimples, which gave a mischievous grace to her face, two buried themselves in her cheeks, the other in her chin, not far from a beauty spot, a little black patch, most killingly placed near the corner of her mouth. Between an embroidered collar well thrown back, and the bottom of the little bonnet, was seen the commencement of a forest of fine hair, so perfectly tied and drawn up, that each hair was as perfectly displayed as if it had been painted on the ivory of this charming neck. A dress of blue merino, with tight sleeves, made by Rigolette herself, set forth a figure so small and slender, that the young girl never wore a corset, from economy. The belt of a little apron of green levantine clasped her waist, which could have been spanned by ten fingers. Confiding in the solitude, in which she believed herself to be, for Rodolphe yet remained at the door, motionless and unperceived, Rigolette, after having smoothed the bands of her hair with her little fairy hand, white and perfectly soignée, put her small foot on a chair and bent over to tighten the lacings of her boot. This familiar operation could not be accomplished without exposing to the indiscreet eyes of Rodolphe a cotton stocking white as snow, and the half of a perfectly well-turned leg. After the detailed recital which we have made of her toilet, one can guess that the grisette had chosen her prettiest robe and apron, to do honour to her neighbour in their visit to the Temple.

She found the pretended clerk very much to her liking; his face, at once benevolent, proud, and bold, pleased her much; besides, he showed himself so kind towards the Morels, generously granting them his chamber, that, thanks to this proof of goodness, and perhaps also thanks to his handsome features, Rodolphe had, without suspecting it, made a giant step in the confidence of the seamstress. She, from her practical ideas on the forced intimacy and reciprocal obligations which were imposed on neighbours, very frankly esteemed herself happy that a neighbour such as Rodolphe had succeeded the travelling clerk, Cabron, and François Germain; for she began to find that the other chamber had remained too long vacant, and, above all, she feared it would not be occupied in a suitable manner. Rodolphe profited by his situation to cast a curious "coup d'œil" around the apartment, which he found even above the praises that Madame Pipelet had granted as to

the excessive neatness of the housekeeping of Rigolette. A gray paper, with bunches of green flowers, covered the walls; the floor, coloured red, shone like a mirror. A white china stove was placed on the hearth, where was arranged a small provision of wood, cut so short, so thin, that, without hyperbole, one could compare each piece to an enormous match. On the stone mantelpiece, painted to imitate marble, could be seen two common flower-pots, coloured a fine emerald green, and in spring always filled with common, but fragrant flowers; a little frame of boxwood, enclosing a silver watch, supplied the place of a clock; on one side shone a copper candlestick, sparkling like gold, containing the end of a wax candle; on the other shone, not less splendidly, one of those lamps formed of a cylinder and a reflector of copper, mounted on a stand of steel and leaden foot. A good-sized square glass, with a frame of black wood, was placed over the chimney-piece. Curtains of gray and green chintz, edged with woollen binding, manufactured entirely by Rigolette, and also placed by her on the black iron rods, were suspended from the windows and bed, which last was covered with a counterpane of the same material; two closets, with glass doors painted white, on each side of the alcove, enclosed without doubt the housekeeping articles, the portable furnace, the brooms, &c., &c., for none of these objects spoiled the coquettish appearance of this chamber.

A "commode" of fine, raised walnut wood, well polished, four chairs of the same material, a large table for ironing and for work, covered with a green woollen cloth, a cane-bottomed arm-chair, with a tabouret to match, the ordinary seat of the grisette, such was this modest "mobilier." Finally, in one of the windows stood a cage with two birds, the faithful messmates of Rigolette.

When one of these fertile ideas which come only to the poor, this cage was placed in the middle of a large wooden box, about one foot in depth, standing on a table; this box, which Rigolette called her birds' garden, was filled with earth, covered with moss during the winter; in the spring was sown with grass and little flowers.

Rodolphe contemplated this apartment with interest and with curiosity; he comprehended perfectly the joyous air of this young girl. He imagined to himself this solitude enlivened by the warbling of the birds and the songs of Rigolette; during the summer, doubtless, she worked near the open window, half veiled by a verdant curtain of sweet pease, orange nasturtiums, blue and white morning-glories; in the winter at the corner of her little stove, at the soft light of her lamp. Then each Sunday she varied this laborious life with a day of innocent pleasures partaken with a neighbour as young, gay, thoughtless as herself. On Monday she resumed her labours, thinking on pleasures past and to come.

Rodolphe was musing on these things when, mechanically regarding the door, he saw an enormous lock; a lock which would have done honour to a prison. This made him reflect. It could have two applications, two distinct uses: to shut the door on her sweethearts; to shut them out! to shut them in. One of these uses would radically ruin the assertions of Madame Pipelet; the other would confirm it.

Rodolphe was thinking about these matters, when Rigolette, turning her head, perceived him, and, without changing her attitude, said to him, "Ah, neighbour, you were there, then?"

CHAPTER XII.

THE TWO NEIGHBOURS.

THE boot being laced, the pretty leg disappeared under the ample folds of the blue dress, and Rigolette continued, "Ah! you were there, then, 'Monsieur le Sournois?'" "I was there, admiring in silence." "And what did you admire, my neighbour?" "This pretty little chamber, for you are lodged like a queen, my neighbour." "Marry! do you see, it is my luxury; if I never go out, at least I can please myself at home." "I cannot but admire it. What handsome curtains! and this commode—as handsome as mahogany! You must have spent a great deal of money here?"

"Don't speak of it! I had four hundred and twenty-five francs when I came out of prison—almost all is gone." "Came out of prison!—you!"

"Yes, it is quite a history. You think—is it not so—that I was not in prison for having done wrong?"

"Doubtless; but how was it?" "After the cholera, I found myself alone in the world. I was then about ten years old." "But, until that time, who took charge of you?" "Oh! very good people; but they are dead with the cholera." Here the large black eyes of Rigolette became moist. "The few things they possessed were sold to pay their debts, and I found myself alone, no one being willing to receive me. Not knowing what to do, I went to the guard-house, which was opposite our dwelling, and I said to the sentinel, 'Good soldier, my parents are dead; I do not know where to go. What must I do?' Thereupon the officer came; he sent me to a commissioner, who sent me to prison as a vagrant, and I came out at sixteen."

"But your parents?" "I do not know who my father was: I was six years old when I lost my mother, who had withdrawn me from the foundling-hospital, where she had been forced to send me at first. The good people of whom I have spoken lived in the same house; they had no children: seeing me an orphan, they took me with them." "And what was their trade—their condition?"

"Papa Crétu," I called him thus, was a house painter, and his wife embroidered."

"They were, at least, in easy circumstances?"

"Like every household, there were ups and downs: one day abundance, if work was plenty; to-morrow, want, if there was none; but that did not hinder them from being always gay and always content." (At this "souvenir" the face of Rigolette became once more smiling.) "There was not in the quarter such a household: always lively, always singing; with all that, good as they could be: what they had for themselves they had for others. Madame Crétu was a jovial woman of thirty, neat as a penny, lively as an eel, gay as a lark. Her husband was another Roger Bontemps: he had a large nose, a large mouth, always a paper cap on his head, and such a funny face—so funny that you could not

look at him without laughing. When he returned to the house from his work, he did nothing but sing, make faces, and play like a child; he made me dance, jump on his knees: he played with me as if I had been of his age, and his wife spoiled me. Oh! it was a blessing. Both of them required but one thing of me, which was, to be always in good humour; and I was not wanting in that. *Dieu merci!* Thus they baptized me Rigolette, from '*rigoler*,' to make merry, and the name remains to me. As to gayety, they set me the example. Never have I seen them sad. If they made any reproaches, it was the wife who said to the husband, '*Stop, Crétu, it is foolish; you make me laugh too much!*' or it was he who said to his wife, '*Stop; hold your tongue, Romanette; hold your tongue, you make me sick; you are too funny!*' As for me, I laughed to see them laugh. In this manner was I brought up; and as they formed my character, I hope I have profited by it."

"Wonderfully, my neighbour! Thus they never disputed among themselves?"

"Never, never! Sunday, Monday, sometimes Tuesday, they played, as they said, *a frolic*, and they always took me with them. Papa Crétu was a good workman: when he wished to work, he earned as much as he wanted; his wife also. As soon as they had enough for Sunday and Monday, and to live along so so, they were content."

"After that, if there was no work?"

"They were just as well satisfied. I recollect that, when we had only bread and water, Papa Crétu took from his library—"

"He had a library?"

"He called a little closet so, where he kept a collection of songs. He bought all the new ones, and learned them all. When there was no bread in the house, he took from his library an old cookery-book, and said to us, '*Come, let us see what we shall eat to-day; this?—that?*' And he would read out the names of a thousand good things. Each one would choose a dish. Papa Crétu took an empty saucepan, and, with the funniest capers in the world, he would pretend to put into it everything that was necessary to make a good ragout; and he would make believe to turn it all out into an empty plate, which he placed on the table in such a manner as to make us hold our sides with laughter; then he would take his book again, and, while he read to us the receipt for a good fricassée which we had chosen, and which made the water come in our mouths, we ate our bread, shouting with laughter, like fools."

"And had this joyous household any debts?"

"Never! As long as there was money we feasted; when there was none we dined in *water-colours*, as Papa Crétu said, borrowing the expression from his trade."

"And the future, did they not think of that?"

"Ah! yes. The future for us was the Sundays and Mondays. In summer we passed them at the '*barrières*,' in winter, in the suburbs."

"But, now, see," said Rigolette, "how I talk. It is that, when I once get on the subject of these kind people, I don't know when to stop. Here, neighbour, be kind enough to take my shawl from the bed, and fasten it under my collar with this large pin, and we will descend, for we will not be in time to choose at the Temple what you wish to buy for these poor Morels."

Rodolphe hurried to obey the orders of Rigo-

lette. He took from the bed a large plaid shawl, brown and red, and carefully placed it on the charming shoulders of Rigolette.

"Now, neighbour, raise my collar a little; fasten the dress and shawl together; stick the pin in well; but, above all, be careful not to prick me."

To execute these new commands, it was necessary that Rodolphe should almost touch this ivory neck. The day was dark; he drew very near—doubtless too near, for the grisette uttered a little startled cry. We cannot tell the cause of this cry. Was it the point of the pin? Was it the mouth of Rodolphe which had touched this white and polished neck? However this may be, Rigolette turned quickly, and cried in a manner half laughing, half sad, which made Rodolphe almost regret the liberty he had taken.

"My neighbour, I shall never ask you again to fasten my shawl."

"Pardon, my neighbour; I am so unhandy."

"On the contrary, monsieur—and it is this of which I complain. Come—your arm—but be correct, or we will quarrel!"

"True, my neighbour, it was not my fault: your pretty neck was so white, that I had a kind of dizziness. In spite of myself my head fell, and—"

"Well, well, for the future I shall take care to give you no cause for this dizziness," said Rigolette, shaking her finger at him. Then she shut her door. "Here, my neighbour, take my key—it is too large—it will make a hole in my pocket; it is a real little pistol." And then she laughed.

Rodolphe took charge of an enormous key, which would have cut a glorious figure on one of those allegorical plates which the vanquished used humbly to offer to the conquerors of a city. Although Rodolphe believed that time had changed his appearance, yet, when he passed the door of the quack, he raised the collar of his palette.

"Neighbour, do not forget to inform M. Pipelet that things will be brought here which must be sent to your chamber," said Rigolette.

"You are right, my neighbour; we will stop for a moment in the lodge of the porter."

M. Pipelet, his everlasting "*chapeau tromblou*" on his head, was, as usual, dressed in his green coat, and gravely seated before a table covered with pieces of leather and the wrecks of all sorts of shoes. He was then busy in new-soleing a boot, in the serious and conscientious manner which he always preserved. Anastasia was absent from the lodge.

"Well, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette to him, "I hope I have some news. Thanks to my neighbour, the poor Morels are out of trouble. When one thinks that they were going to take the poor man to prison! Oh! the bailiffs are the real *no-hearts!*"

"And *no-manners* also, mademoiselle," added M. Pipelet, in an angry tone, gesticulating with the boot, into which he had introduced his left arm and hand. "No; I do not fear to repeat it, in the face of heaven and man, they are great *no-manners!* They profited by the darkness of the staircase to use their indecent gestures on the figure of my wife. On hearing her cries of offended modesty, in spite of myself I gave up to the vivacity of my character. I do not conceal it: my first movement was to remain immovable, and to become purple with shame, in thinking of the odious attacks of which Anastasia was

the victim, which her wandering reason proved, since, in her delirium, she threw her saucepan from the top to the bottom of the staircase. At this moment the frightful debauchees passed before my lodge." "You pursued them, I hope, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, preserving her countenance with great difficulty. "I thought of it," answered M. Pipelet, with a profound sigh. "When I reflected that I must confront their regards—perhaps even their licentious conversation—it revolted me—quite made me beside myself. I am no more cruel than any other; but when these brazen-faces passed before the lodge my blood boiled, and I could not prevent myself placing my hand quickly before my eyes, to hide them from the sight of these luxurious malefactors! But this does not astonish me; something unfortunate must happen to-day: I dreamed of this monster of a Cabrion!" Rigolette smiled, and the noise of the sighs of M. Pipelet was confounded with the blows of the hammer which he applied to the sole of the old boot. From the remarks of Alfred, it was evident that Anastasia had most outrageously bragged, and misrepresented the affair. "My neighbour," whispered Rigolette to Rodolphe, "let this poor M. Pipelet think his wife has been cajoled: secretly it flatters him." "You have wisely taken the wisest part, my dear M. Pipelet," said Rodolphe, "that of contempt. Besides, the virtue of Madame Pipelet is above all attempts."

"Her virtue, monsieur! her virtue!" and Alfred began to gesticulate again with his boot. "I'd place my head on the scaffold! The glory of the great Napoleon, and the virtue of Anastasia, I can answer for as for my own honour, monsieur." "And you are right, Monsieur Pipelet. But forget these wretches, and render me a service, I pray you." "Men are created to assist one another," answered M. Pipelet, in a sententious and melancholy manner; "so much the more reasonable, when so kind a lodger as monsieur is in question." "I wish to have some things I shall send here directly, carried to my room. They are for the Morels."

"I will attend to it, monsieur."

"And then," said Rodolphe, sadly, "I wish to send for a priest, to watch and pray over the little girl they have lost, to go and announce her death, and at the same time prepare for her funeral. Here is the money; arrange everything; the benefactor of the Morels wishes everything done well." "Depend upon me, monsieur; Anastasia is gone to buy our dinner; as soon as she returns, I will make her take charge of the lodge, and I will attend to your commissions." At this moment a man, so completely wrapped up in his cloak that his eyes could scarcely be seen, asked, without coming too near the lodge, if Madame Burette was at home.

"Do you come from Saint Denis?" asked M. Pipelet, with a knowing look. "Yes, in an hour and a quarter." "Just so; then you may go up." The man in the cloak ran rapidly up stairs. "What does this mean?" asked Rodolphe. "Some carryings on at the Mère Burette's, it is going and coming continually. She told me this morning: 'You will ask every one who inquires for me, Do you come from Saint Denis? those who answer, Yes, in an hour and a quarter, you will let them come up; but no others.'"

"It is a real countersign!" said Rodolphe, quite interested.

"Exactly, monsieur; thus I said to myself,

there's something going on at Mère Burette's, without reckoning that Tortillard, a little cripple, who lives with M. César Bradamant, came in to-night at two o'clock with an old woman, who is called La Chouette. She remained until four o'clock with the Mère Burette, while a carriage waited at the door. Where did this one-eyed woman come from? What did she here at that hour? Such are the two questions which I asked myself, without being able to reply," added M. Pipelet, gravely. "And this woman, that you called La Chouette, went away at four o'clock in a hack?" asked Rodolphe. "Yes, monsieur; she will no doubt return, for the Mère Burette said the countersign did not regard the Borgnesse." Rodolphe thought, not without reason, that some new scheme of villainy was in agitation; but, alas! he was far from thinking how much he was interested in it. "It is then agreed, my dear Monsieur Pipelet; do not forget all I have told you, and also beg your wife to send them a good repast from the nearest restaurateurs." "Be quite tranquil," said M. Pipelet; "as soon as my wife returns, I will go to the mayor's, to the church, and to the restaurateurs." To the church for the dead, to the restaurateurs for the living? added, philosophically and poetically, M. Pipelet. "It is just as good as done, monsieur; as good as done." At the entrance of the alley, Rodolphe and Rigolette met face to face Anastasia, who, returning from market, carried a heavy basket of provision. "Good!" cried the portière, looking at the neighbours with a significant air; "already arm in arm; that's right! chaud! chaud! Ah! now, youth will be youth! pretty girl must have a fine beau; vive l'amour! and go along with you!" and the old woman disappeared, crying, "Alfred! don't groan, old darling, here is your Stasia, who brings you some dainties, old sweet tooth!"

Rodolphe, offering his arm to Rigolette, left with her the house of the Rue du Temple.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BUDGET OF RIGOLETTE.

To the snow of the night had succeeded a very cold wind; the pavement, ordinarily muddy, was almost dry. Rigolette and Rodolphe directed their steps towards the immense and singular bazar called the Temple. The young girl leaned without any ceremony on the arm of her cavalier, as little embarrassed as if they had been for a long time acquainted. "Ain't she droll, this Madame Pipelet, with her remarks?" said the grisette to Rodolphe. "Ma foi, my neighbour, I think she is right." "In what, my neighbour?" "She said, 'Youth must pass, vive l'amour, and go along then!'" "Well!" "It is just my manner of thinking." "How?" "I wish to pass my youth with you; to be able to cry vive l'amour, and go where you would conduct me." "I think so; you are not difficult!" "Where would be the harm? we are neighbours." "If we were not, I should not go out with you in this manner." "You tell me, then, to hope?" "To hope what?" "That you will love me?" "I love you already." "Really?" "It is quite simple; you are good, you are gay; although poor yourself, you do what you can for these poor Morels, in interesting rich people in their misfortunes; you have a

face I like, a fine figure. There, I hope you have reasons enough for me to love you." Then stopping to laugh heartily, Rigolette cried; "Do look at that fat woman, with her old fur shoes; one would say she was dragged along by two cats without tails," and then another laugh. "I prefer to look at you, my neighbour; I am so happy to think that you love me already."

"I say this to you, because it is so. If you did not please me, I would tell you all the same. I have no reproaches to make myself for ever having deceived any one, nor of having been a coquette; when any one pleases me, I tell them so at once." Then again interrupting herself to stop before a shop, the grisette cried, "Oh! do look at the pretty clock and the two fine vases! I had already three francs ten sous in my money-box to buy such! In five or six years' economy, I should have had enough." "Economy, my neighbour, and you earn—" "At least thirty sous a day, sometimes forty; but I only reckon on thirty; it is more prudent, and I regulate my expenses accordingly," said Rigolette, with an air as important as if it concerned the financial balance of a formidable budget. "But with thirty sous a day, how can you live?" "The account is not long: shall I make it for you, my neighbour? you have a prodigal manner, it shall serve you for an example." "Let us see, my neighbour."

"My thirty sous a day make forty-five francs a month, ain't it so?" "Yes." "Twelve francs for my rent, and twenty-three for my living." "Twenty-three francs for your living?" "Mon Dieu! yes, quite as much! Confess that, for a lark like me, it is enormous! 'par exemple,' I refuse myself nothing." "Ah! you little glutton." "Yes, but I include the food for my birds." "It is certain that if you all three live on this sum, it is less exorbitant. But let me have the daily expenses—always for my instruction." "Listen—well, one pound of bread is four sous; two sous for milk, that makes six; four sous for vegetables in winter, or fruits and salad in summer; I adore salad, because it is so easily dressed, and does not soil the hands; well, now you have ten sous; three sous for butter, or oil and vinegar for seasoning, thirteen; fine, clear water, oh! that is my luxury that makes my fifteen sous, if you please; add to this each week two or three sous of chickweed and hemp to regale my birds, who ordinarily eat crumbs of bread and some milk, it is twenty-two or twenty-three francs a month, neither more nor less."

"And you never eat meat?" "Ah, yes, meat; that costs from ten to twelve sous a pound; can one even think of it? and, besides, that smells of the kitchen; while milk, and vegetables, and fruit are always ready. Hold! a dish that I adore, which is not embarrassing, and which I make to perfection." "Let us have the dish."

"I put five yellow potatoes in the oven of my stove; when they are baked, I mash them with a little butter and milk—a pinch of salt. It is a feast for the gods! If you are a good boy, I'll make some for you to taste."

"Arranged by your pretty hands, it must be excellent. But come, your account, my neighbour! We have already twenty-three francs for board, twelve francs for lodging; that makes thirty-five per month."

"To reach the forty-five or fifty that I earn, there remains ten to fifteen francs for my wood during winter, my oil, and washing; that is to

say, for my soap; for, excepting my sheets, I do my own washing. It is, again, my luxury—a washerwoman would cost the eyes out of my head—while I can iron pretty well, and thus get along. During the five months of winter I burn a load and a half of wood; and I spend four or five sous for oil each day for my lamp; that makes about eighty francs a year for my wood and light."

"So that, at the most, you have about one hundred francs left."

"Yes; and there it is I economize my three francs ten sous."

"But your dresses, your shoes, this pretty bonnet?" "My bonnets I only put on when I go out; and that does not ruin me, for I turn them myself; as to my robes, my boots—isn't the Temple close at hand?"

"Ah! yes—this fortunate temple. Well! you find there—"

"Excellent, and very pretty dresses. You must know that the great ladies are accustomed to give their old dresses to their 'femmes des chambres.' When I say old, that is to say, they have worn them for a month or two in the carriage; and the femmes des chambres go and sell them in the Temple, almost for nothing. Thus, you see, I have a robe of very fine merino, for which I paid fifteen francs; it has cost, no doubt, sixty; it had hardly been worn; I altered it to my figure, and I hope it does me honour!" "It is you who does it honour, my neighbour. But, with the help of the Temple, I begin to see how you manage."

"Is it not so? You can get charming dresses for summer at five or six francs; boots, like these I wear, for two or three. Now, look here! would you not say they were made for me?" said Rigolette, stopping to show the end of her charming foot. "The foot is charming, it is true, but it must be difficult for you to fit it; but I suppose you'll tell me they have children's shoes, also, at the Temple."

"You are a flatterer, my neighbour; but acknowledge that a little girl, all alone, can live on thirty sous a day! I must say, however, that the four hundred and fifty francs that I brought from prison have nicely helped me to establish myself. When I was once seen, all furnished, it inspired confidence, and they gave me work to take home; but I had to wait a long time before I got it; happily, I had reserved enough to live three months without reckoning on work." "With your little thoughtless manner, do you know you have much method and regularity, my neighbour?" "Marry! when one is alone in the world, and wishes to be under obligations to no one, it is quite necessary to build and arrange his own nest, as they say." "And your nest is charming! is it not?" "For I refuse myself nothing; I have even an apartment above my station; I have birds; in summer, always at least two pots of flowers on my chimney, without reckoning the boxes in my window, and those of my cage; and yet, as I tell you, I had already three francs and a half in my money-box; so that, some day, I might be able to buy an ornament for my chimney-piece." "And what has become of these savings?" "Mon Dieu! since I have seen these poor Morels so unfortunate! so unfortunate, I said! There is no good sense in having three foolish pieces of twenty sous in a money-box, when honest folks are dying with hunger alongside of you! so I lent my three francs to the Morels. When I say lent,

"It was not to humiliate them, for I would have given it willingly." "You did well, my neighbour, for, now they are once more comfortable, they will reimburse you." "That is true; and I will not refuse it; it will always be the commencement—to buy the ornaments—it is my dream!" "And then you ought to think a little about the future." "The future?" "If you should fall sick, for instance." "I? sick?" and again she burst into a merry laugh; a laugh so loud, that a fat man who walked before her, carrying a dog under his arm, turned round, supposing it was at him. Rigolette, without ceasing to laugh, made him a half courtesy, accompanied by such a droll look, that Rodolphe could not prevent himself from partaking of the hilarity of his companion. The man continued on his way, grumbling. "Are you crazy? come, my neighbour!" said Rodolphe, assuming the serious. "It is your fault!"

"My fault?" "Yes; you say such funny things." "Because I tell you that you may fall sick?" "Sick! I?" and another laugh. "Why not?" "Do I look like it?"

"Never have I seen a more rosy, healthful face."

"Well, then, why do you wish that I should fall sick? How, at eighteen, with the life I lead, can that be possible? I get up at five o'clock, summer as well as winter; I go to bed at ten or eleven; I eat as much as I want, which is not much, it is true; I suffer none from the cold; I work all day; I sing like a lark; I sleep like a marmot; I have a free, joyous, and contented heart; I am sure never to want work, so now how would you have me fall sick? It would be too funny." And again a laugh.

Rodolphe, struck with this blind and happy confidence in the future, reproached himself with having run the risk of shaking it. He thought, with a kind of affright, that one month's sickness might destroy this peaceful and joyous life. This profound faith in her strength and her eighteen years, her only wealth, seemed to Rodolphe holy, and to be respected. On the part of the young girl, it was not thoughtlessness, nor improvidence; it was an instinctive belief in Divine justice and commiseration, who could not abandon an industrious and good creature, a poor girl, whose only fault was to count on the youth and health which she had from God. In the spring-time, when, with agile wing, the birds of heaven, singing and joyous, skim on the verdant meadows, or cut the air, rising to the blue and smiling skies, have they any care for the coming frosts of winter? "Then," said Rodolphe to the grisette, "you desire nothing?" "Nothing." "Absolutely nothing?" "No, that is to say, understand me, the ornament for my mantelpiece; and I will have it. I don't know when; but I have it in my head, and it shall be. I will sooner encroach on my nights." "And besides this ornament?" "Nothing, only since to-day." "How is that?" "Because, only the day before yesterday I desired a neighbour, who might please me—to arrange with him as I have always done—good housekeeping—so as to render services to him, which he would render to me in return. That is already agreed upon, my neighbour; you will take care of my linen, and I will wash your floor, without reckoning that you are to awaken me early, by knocking against the wall." "And you think that's all?" "What else is there?" "Ah! well! you are not at the end. Must you not, on Sundays, take me to walk to the

'Barrières,' or on the Boulevards? I have only this day for recreation." "That's it: in summer we will go to the country." "No, I detest the country; I like Paris alone. Yet, in the times past, I have made some excursions to Saint Germain with one of my prison companions, who was called La Goualeuse, because she was always singing; a very good little girl!" "What has become of her?" "I do not know; she spent her prison money without appearing to amuse herself much; she was always sad, but always amiable and charitable. When we went out together, I had no work; when I got some, I never stirred; I gave her my address; she has not been to see me; doubtless she is as busy as I am. I was to tell you, my neighbour, that I like Paris better than all. Thus, when you can, on Sundays, you will take me to dine 'a frères,' sometimes to the play, otherwise, if you have no money, you will take me to see the shops in the 'passages'; it will amuse me almost as much. But don't you be afraid; in our little excursions I shall do you honour. You will see how genteel I am in my pretty blue Levantine dress, which I only wear on Sundays; it fits me like a glove; I have with this a little bonnet, trimmed with lace and orange ribands, which suits well with my black hair, boots of Turkish satin, which I had made for me, and a silk shawl, imitation Cashmere. Go along, my neighbour, every one will turn to see us pass. The men will say, 'But ain't she genteel, this little girl, upon my word?' and the women, on their side, 'Really he has a very distinguished air, this tall, slender young man; his little brown mustaches become him so well;' and I shall be of the same opinion as the ladies, for I adore mustaches. Unfortunately, M. Germain did not wear them on account of his office. M. Cabrion had them, but they were red, like his beard, and I don't like a red beard; and, besides, he was too much of a boy in the streets, and tormented M. Pipelet so. To be sure, M. Girardeau (my neighbour before M. Cabrion) had a very good appearance, but he squinted; at first this troubled me, for he always appeared to be looking at some one alongside of me, and, without thinking, I turned to look who;" and another laugh.

Rodolphe listened to this prattle with curiosity; he asked himself, for the third time, what he ought to think of the virtue of the grisette. Sometimes her freedom of speech and the recollections of the large lock, made him almost believe that she loved her neighbours as brothers—as companions, and that Madame Pipelet had calumniated her; then he thought it impossible that a young girl so situated could have escaped the blandishments of the three gentlemen who were her neighbours previously. Yet the frankness, the original familiarity of Rigolette caused new doubts. "You charm me, my neighbour, in thus disposing of my Sundays," answered Rodolphe, gayly; "be quite easy; we will have some famous parties."

"One moment, Mr. Spendthrift: I shall carry the purse, I forewarn you. In summer we can dine very well—very well! for three francs, at the Chartreuse or at the Hermitage Montmartre, a half dozen contré-dances or waltzes in the bargain, and a ride on the flying horses—I adore to get on the horses—that will just make your five francs, not a liard more. Do you waltz?" "Very well." "Ah, good! M. Cabrion always trod on my feet, and, besides, for fun, he threw torpedoes on the floor, so they will not have us

any more at the Charitreuse." And another laugh. "Don't be afraid, I will answer for my reserve on the score of torpedoes; but what shall we do in winter?" "In winter, as one has less hunger, we can dine very well for forty sous, and we shall have three francs left for the play, for I will not allow you to go over your five francs. It is quite enough indeed, but you would spend it alone either at a smoking room, or at billiards with worthless fellows who smell of the pipe horribly. Is it not better to spend them gayly with a little friend, a good child, ever laughing, who will find the time to save you some expense in hemming your cravats and taking care of your clothes?" "Why it is clear gain, my neighbour. Only if my friends should meet me with my pretty little friend under my arm?" "Well! they would say, he is not unfortunate, this devil of a Rodolphe!" "You know my name?" "When I heard the chamber was let, I asked to whom." "And my friends would say, he is very fortunate this Rodolphe! and they will envy me."

"So much the better!" "They will think me happy." "So much the better! so much the better!" "And if I am not as happy as they think I am?" "What is that to you? as long as they think so." "But your reputation?" Rigolette burst into a loud laugh. "The reputation of a grisette! does any one believe in such meteors?" answered she. "If I had father or mother, brother or sister, I would on their account take care what people said—I am all alone, it regards me only." "But I should be very unhappy." "For what?" "To pass for being happy, while, on the contrary, I shall love you, just like you dined at Papa Crétu's, in eating your dry bread while he read the cookery book."

"Bah! bah! you shall be so; I shall be to you so gentle, so grateful, so little troublesome that you shall say, 'After all, just as well to pass my Sundays with her as with a comrade. If you are not engaged on week evenings, and it does not tire you, you shall come and pass the evening with me; you shall have the benefit of my fire and my lamp; you shall read romances, which you must hire—just as well do that as lose your money at billiards; if not, if you are busy until late, or would rather go to a café, you shall say good-night to me on coming in, if I am still up. If I am in bed, the next morning I will say good-day to you through the walls to awaken you. M. Germain, my last neighbour, passed all his evenings in this manner with me, and he did not complain! He read to me all Walter Scott's works. That was amusing. Sometimes on Sunday, when the weather was bad, instead of going to the theatre, or going out at all, he went and bought something, we made a real little dinner in my room, and after that we read. That amused me almost as much as the play. It is to say to you that I am not difficult, and I do what one wishes. And, besides, you, who talk of being sick, if you ever should be—it is I who am a real little sister of charity! ask the Morels. Ah! you don't know your happiness, Monsieur Rodolphe—it is a real prize in the lottery to have me for a neighbour." "It is true, I have always had luck; but this M. Germain, where is he now?" "In Paris, I think." "You don't see him any more?" "Since he left the house, he has not returned." "But where does he live? what does he do?"

"Why all these questions, my neighbour?"

"Because I am jealous of him," said Rodolphe, smiling, "and that I wish—"

"Jealous!" and again Rigolette laughed.

"There is no cause, go along. Poor fellow!"

When the hilarity of Rigolette was a little appeased, Rodolphe continued: "Seriously, my neighbour, I have the greatest interest in knowing where to meet M. Germain; you know where he lives, and, without boasting, you ought to believe me incapable of abusing the secret I ask you. I swear to you it is for his interest." "Seriously, my neighbour, I believe you could wish to do much good to M. Germain, but he has made me promise that I would not tell his address to any one; and since I don't tell it to you it is because it is impossible; that ought not to make you angry with me. If you had confided a secret to me, you would be pleased, is it not so, to see me act as I do?" "But, look here, my neighbour, once for all, do not speak any more about this; I have made a promise; I will keep it, and, whatever you may say, I shall make you the same answer." Notwithstanding her levity, her heedlessness, the young girl accented these last words so firmly, that Rodolphe comprehended, to his great regret, that he would not obtain from her what he wished to know. It was repugnant to him to employ cunning to surprise the confidence of Rigolette; he waited, and answered gayly,

"Let us speak no more about it, my neighbour. Diable! you keep so well the secrets of others, that I am no longer astonished that you keep your own."

"Secrets—mine! I should like to have some; it must be very amusing."

"How! have you not a little secret concerning the heart?"

"A secret—of the heart?" "In fine, have you never loved?" said Rodolphe, regarding her fixedly to divine the truth.

"How! never loved? and M. Girardeau? and M. Cabron? and M. Germain? and you then?" "Have you not loved them more than me, differently from me?" "Ma foi! no; less, perhaps, for it was necessary to become accustomed to the squint of M. Girardeau, to the red beard and jokes of M. Cabron, to the sadness of M. Germain, for he was very sad, this poor young man. You, on the contrary, pleased me at once."

"Come, my neighbour, don't be angry; I am going to speak to you in a neighbourly manner." "Go on, go on my character is well formed; and besides, you are so good, that you would not have the heart, I am sure of it, to say anything to me that would give me pain."

"No doubt." "But come, frankly, have you never had a lover?"

"Lover! ah; yes! do you think I have the time?"

"What has time to do with that?" "What has it to do? why, everything. In the first place, I should be jealous as a tiger; I should always have the headache; well, do I earn money enough to be able to lose two or three hours a day to weep and moan? And if they deceive me, how many tears, how much sorrow—ah, well, that would be a fine business!"

"But all lovers are not unfaithful, do not make their mistresses weep." "That would be worse still; if he was so kind, could I live a moment away from him? and as he would be absent all day at his office, his shop, or his workroom, I should be like a poor soul in purgatory during his absence! I could imagine a thousand things."

"* * * It is all that I can do, quiet as I am now,

to get along by working twelve to fifteen hours a day. You see, then, if I lose three or four days in the week in this way, troubling and tormenting myself, how can I ever regain the time? impossible. No, I love my liberty too well."

"Your liberty?" "Yes, I could enter as first workwoman at the shop where I get my work. I should have four hundred francs, lodging and nourishment." "And you do not accept?"

"Certainly not. I should be under wages like the others; instead of that, no matter how poor it is, I am at least at home; I owe nothing. I have courage, health, strength, and gaiety; a good neighbour like you; what do I want more?" "And you never think of marrying?"

"I marry! I can only marry one as poor as myself. Look at the poor Morels! see what it leads to; while that, when one has only to answer for one's self, one can always retire." "Then, you never build castles in Spain—dreams?" "Yes, I dream of my chimney ornaments. Except this, what do you wish that I should desire?" "But if a relation had left you a small fortune? twelve hundred francs income, I'll suppose—to you who live on five hundred?"

"Marry! that would be perhaps well, perhaps an evil." "An evil?" "I am happy as I am: I only know the life I lead; I do not know that which I should lead if I were rich. Look ye, my neighbour, when, after a good day's work, I go to rest at night, when my lamp is out, and by the light of the few coals which remain in my stove, I see my chamber so neat, my curtains, my commode, my chairs, my birds, my watch, my table laden with stuffs which have been confided to me, and I say to myself, 'All this is mine, and I owe it but to myself; true, my neighbour, these ideas lull me to sleep gently—*allez!* proudly sometimes, but always content. Well! if I owed all this to an old relation, it would not give me so much pleasure, I am sure. But hold, here we are at the Temple; acknowledge now that it is a superb coup d'œil!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TEMPLE.

ALTHOUGH Rodolphe did not partake of the profound admiration of *Rigolette* at the sight of the Temple, he was, nevertheless, struck with the singular aspect of this enormous bazar, which has its quarters and its passages. Towards the middle of the "Rue du Temple," not far from a fountain which is placed at the angle of a large square, can be seen a large building of timber, roofed with slate, and in form a parallelogram. It is the Temple. Bounded on the left by the Rue du Petit Thouais, on the right by the Rue Percée, it terminates at a vast circular building, a colossal rotunda, surrounded by a gallery with arcades. A long passage, through the centre, divides it into two equal parts; these are in their turn divided, subdivided "ad infinitum," by a multitude of small lateral and transverse passages, which cross it in every direction, and are sheltered from the rain by the roof of the edifice.

In this bazar all new merchandise is generally prohibited; but the most wretched shreds of stuff of whatever description, the smallest scraps of iron, copper, or steel find here both a buyer and seller. There are here merchants of fragments of cloth of all colours, all shades, all

qualities, every age, destined to patch the pieces to mend old or torn clothes. There are shops where you can find heaps of old shoes run down at the heels, bursted out, cracked, things with a name, without form, without colour, among which appear here and there some *fossi* soles, an inch thick, studded with nails like the doors of a prison, hard as a horseshoe, real skeletons of shoes, all the cohesions of which have been destroyed by time; all this is mouldy, full of holes, corroded, yet it all is bought and sold; there are *merchants* who live by this trade.

There exists retailers of hatbands, fringes, balls, cords, silk, cotton, and thread ravellings, proceeding from the demolition of curtains completely worn out.

Others turn their attention to the trade of women's hats: these hats never reach the shops except in the bags of the "revendeuses," after the strangest perigrations, the most violent transformations, the most incredible discolorations. In fine, so that the merchandise does not take up too much room in a shop ordinarily about as large as an enormous box, these hats are nicely folded in two, after which they are flattened excessively close; except the pickle, it is absolutely the same proceeding as for the preservation of herrings; thus one can imagine how, thanks to this mode of stowing, such things can be kept in a space of four feet square. A purchaser presents himself, this millinery ware is relieved from this high pressure; the shopkeeper gives, in a careless manner, a little blow with her hand in the crown, to raise it, smooths the forepart on her knee, and you have under your eyes a fantastical bygone object, which recalls confusedly to your mind those fabulous head-dresses, particularly belonging to box-openers at the theatre, to the antics of figurantes or the *duennas* of a provincial theatre.

Still farther on, at the sign of the *Fashion of the Day*, under the arcades of the rotunda raised at the end of the large passage which divides the Temple in two parts, are hung up like *ex-voto* offerings myriads of clothes, of colours, forms, and shapes the most extraordinary, still more so than the women's old hats.

Thus one sees frocks of gridekin, most beautifully set off with three rows of brass buttons "à la hussarde," and most warmly ornamented with a little fur collar of foxskin.

Frock coats, primitively bottle green, which time had rendered pea-green, bound with black cord, and made almost like new by a lining of blue and yellow plaid, of the most ludicrous appearance.

Coats, formerly called swallow-tailed, of a mushroom colour, with rich collars of plush, ornamented with buttons once plated with silver, but now a red copperish tint. There was also to be seen maroon polonaises, with collars of cat's skin, trimmed with frogs and loops of black fretted cotton; close at hand were robes de chambre artistically made of old "carriks," lined inside with pieces of calico; the best of them are blue or dingy green, ornamented with variegated cottons, embroidered with "fil passe" and lined with a red stuff figured with orange flowers, facings and collars the same; a "cordelière," made of an old bell cord of twisted wool, serves as a girdle to these elegant dishabilles, in the which Robert Macaire might have flourished with the most lofty good fortune. We will speak only from memory of a mass of costumes of *Frontin*, more or less equivocal,

more or less barbarous, among which one could find now and then some authentic royal or princely liveries, that revolutions of all kinds have dragged from the palace to the gloomy arches of the rounds of the Temple.

This exhibition of old shoes, old hats, and old clothes, is the comical part of this bazar; it is the district of the things of little value, disguised and displayed with much pretension; but we must acknowledge, or rather proclaim, that this vast establishment is of great utility for the poorer classes. There they buy, at two or three hundred per cent. discount, excellent things, almost new, of which the depreciation is almost imaginary. One of the sides of the Temple, destined for bedclothes, was filled with piles of coverings, sheets, mattresses, and pillows. Farther on were carpets, curtains, household utensils of all sorts; besides clothing, shoes, caps, for all conditions, for all ages. These articles, generally of extreme neatness, presented nothing repugnant to the senses. One could not believe, before visiting this bazar, how little time and money were necessary to fill a cart with all that is necessary for the complete establishment of two or three families in want of everything.

Rodolphe was struck with the manner, at once pressing, officious, and cheerful with which the shopkeepers, standing outside their shops, solicited the custom of the passers-by; these manners, stamped with a kind of respectful familiarity, seemed to belong to another age.

Hardly had he appeared in the grand passage, than he was pursued with the most seductive offers.

"Monsieur, come in here and see my mattress—as good as new; I will rip open the corners, you shall see inside; you'll think it is lambs' wool, it's so soft and white!" "My pretty little lady, I have sheets of the finest linen, better than new, for their first roughness is worn off; they are as pliable as a glove, strong as a warp of steel."

"My nice couple, do buy one of these coverings; do you see, it is soft, warm, and light; one would say it was made of down; it is nearly new, for it has not been used twenty times; come, my good lady, make your husband decide—give me your custom, I will fix you off very cheap; you shall be satisfied; you will come back to see 'la Mère Bouvard,' you will find everything in my shop; yesterday, I had a superb chance; you shall see it; 'allons,' come in, then! I ask nothing to show my things."

"Ma foi, my neighbour," said Rodolphe to Rigolette, "this good old soul shall have the preference; she takes us for a young married couple; that flatters me—I decide for her shop."

"Agreed for the good old soul!" said Rigolette. "I fancy her also." The grisette and her companion entered the shop of "la Mère Bouvard."

Through a magnanimity perhaps without example elsewhere than in the Temple, the rivals of "la Mère Bouvard" did not grumble at the preference shown to her; one of her neighbours carried her generosity so far as to say, "As long as it is the 'Mère Bouvard' who has this windfall, good, she has a family, and is 'la doyenne' and honour of the Temple."

"Look here, my pretty little lady," said she to Rigolette, who examined several things with the eye of a connoisseur, "here is what I spoke of; two sets of bedclothes complete, as good as new. If by chance you should want a little old secre-

tary, not dear, here is one; I got it in the same lot. Although ordinarily I do not buy furniture, I could not refuse to take it; the persons from whom I got all these things seemed so unhappy! Poor lady! It was, above all, the sale of this antiquity which seemed to make her heart bleed. It appears it was an old family relic."

At these words, and while the old woman talked with Rigolette about the prices of different articles, Rodolphe examined more attentively the article which "la Mère Bouvard" had shown him.

It was one of those old-fashioned secretaries of rosewood, of a form almost triangular, closed by a panel in front, which, when unfolded and sustained by two long supports of copper, served as a writing-table. In the middle of this panel, ornamented with inlaid work of various coloured wood, Rodolphe remarked a cipher, incrustated with ebony, and composed of an M and an R intertwined, surmounted by a counts' crown. He supposed that the last possessor of this piece of furniture belonged to the upper classes of society. His curiosity was redoubled; he looked at the secretary with a new scrutiny: he mechanically opened the drawers, one after the other, when, finding some difficulty with the last, and, seeking the cause of this obstacle, he discovered and drew out with care a leaf of paper, which had slipped under the drawer.

While Rigolette was finishing her purchases, Rodolphe examined closely his discovery. Among the scratches which covered the paper, Rodolphe read what was evidently part of an unfinished letter.

"Monsieur—Be persuaded that most fearful misfortunes could alone induce me to take this step. It is not pride misplaced which causes my scruples; it is the absolute want of any claim for the oldest shopkeeper, the longest established for the services I dare to ask you. The sight of my daughter, reduced like myself to the most fearful want, overcomes my embarrassment. A few words will suffice to inform you of the cause of the disasters which overwhelm me."

"After the death of my husband, I had for my fortune three hundred thousand francs placed by my brother with M. Jacques Ferrand, a notary. I received at Angers, where I had retired with my daughter, the interest of this sum through the hands of my brother. You know, M., the frightful event which put an end to his days; ruined, as it appears, by secret and unfortunate speculations, he killed himself eight months since. At the time of this fatal event, I received from him some desperate lines. When I should read them, he wrote, that he should exist no longer. He terminated this letter in informing me that he possessed no title relative to the sum placed in my name with M. Jacques Ferrand; that he never gave a receipt, for he was honour, piety itself; it would suffice for me to present myself to him for this affair to be suitably regulated."

"As soon as it was possible for me to think of anything else than the frightful death of my brother, I came to Paris, where I knew no one but you, monsieur, and that indirectly by the relations which you had had with my husband. I have told you, that the sum deposited with M. Jacques Ferrand formed all my fortune; and my brother sent me every six months the interest of this money; more than a year had passed since the last payment. I presented myself to M.

Jacques Ferrand to demand a revenue, of which I had the greatest need.

"Hardly had I named myself, than, without respect for my grief, he accused my brother of having borrowed from him two thousand francs which he lost by his death; adding, that his suicide was not only a crime before God, and before man, but it was also an act of spoliation of which he, M. Jacques Ferrand, was a victim.

"This odious language aroused me; the probability of my brother was well known; he had, it is true, unknown to me and his friends, lost his fortune in hazardous speculations; but he was dead with a reputation intact, regretted by all, and leaving no debt save that of the notary.

"I answered M. Ferrand that I authorized him to take at once, from the money of mine which he had in charge, the two thousand francs which my brother owed him. At these words he regarded me with an air of surprise, and asked me what money I was talking about.

"Of that which my brother placed with you eighteen months since, monsieur, of which until now you have paid me the interest through him," said I, not understanding his question.

"The notary shrugged his shoulders, smiled with pity, and answered that, far from having placed any money with him, my brother had borrowed from him two thousand francs. It is impossible to express to you my alarm at this answer. 'But what has become of this sum?' cried I. 'My daughter and myself have no other resource; if this is taken from us, there is nothing left us but the most abject poverty. What will become of us?'

'I don't know,' answered the notary, coldly. 'It is probable that your brother, instead of placing this amount with me, has lost it in these speculations, which he carried on unknown to every one.'

"It is false! it is infamous!" I cried. 'My brother was honour itself. Far from robbing me and my daughter, he sacrificed himself for us. He would never marry that he might leave what he possessed to my child.'

"Do you dare, then, to pretend, madame, that I am capable of denying a deposit which has been confided to me?" asked the notary, with indignation, which appeared so honourable and sincere, that I answered,

"No, surely, not, monsieur; your reputation for probity is known; but I cannot, however, accuse my brother of such a cruel abuse of confidence."

"On what titles do you pretend to claim this of me?" asked M. Ferrand. 'On none, monsieur. Eighteen months since, my brother, who managed my affairs, wrote me: "I have an excellent investment at six per cent.; send me your power of attorney to sell your 'rentes'; I shall deposit three hundred thousand francs with M. Jacques Ferrand, notary." I sent my power to my brother; a few days after, he advised me that he had made the deposit with you, that you never gave a receipt, and at the end of six months he sent me the interest due.'

"And at least you have some letters from him on this subject, madame?"

"No, monsieur. They treated of business alone; I did not preserve them."

"I can, unfortunately, do nothing, madame," answered the notary. 'If my probity was not above all suspicion, all doubt, I would say to you: The tribunals are open; attack me; the

judges will have to choose between the word of an honourable man, who for thirty years enjoys the esteem of worthy people, and the posthumous declaration of a man who, after having ruined himself in the most mad speculations, has only found a refuge in suicide. I would say to you in fine: Attack me, madame, if you dare, and the memory of your brother will be dishonoured. But I believe that you will have the good sense to resign yourself to a misfortune great, without doubt, but to which I am a stranger."

"But, monsieur, I am a mother! if my fortune is taken from me, my daughter, and myself have no other resource except our furniture—that sold, it is poverty, monsieur, frightful poverty!"

"You have been duped; it is a misfortune; I cannot help it," answered the notary. 'I left the notary more dead than alive; what remained for me to do in this extremity? With no title to prove the validity of my claim, convinced of the probity of my brother, confounded by the assurance of M. Ferrand, having no one from whom I could ask advice (you were then travelling), knowing that it needed money to procure the opinion of lawyers, I dared not to undertake such a process. Then it was—"

This piece of a letter stopped there; for scribbles not to be deciphered covered some lines which still remained; finally, at the bottom in a corner, Rodolphe read this kind of memorandum:

"WRITE TO MADAME LA DUCHESSE DE LIGENAY."

Rodolphe remained thoughtful after reading this fragment of a letter. Although the new infamy of which it seemed to accuse Jacques Ferrand was not proved, this man had shown himself so devoid of pity towards the unfortunate Morel, so infamous towards Louise, his daughter, that a denial of a deposit, protected by certain impunity, could hardly be astonishing on his part.

This mother, who reclaimed this fortune so strangely disappeared, was without doubt accustomed to a competency. Ruined by a sudden blow, knowing no one at Paris, what must have become of these two women, stripped of everything, alone in this immense city? Rodolphe had, as we know, promised some intrigues to Madame d'Harville, in assigning her by chance, ought to occupy her mind, a part to play in a good work to be forthcoming, certain to find, before his next interview with the marquise, some unfortunate to solace. He thought that perhaps chance might put him in the way of some worthy unfortunate, who could, according to his project, interest the heart and imagination of Madame d'Harville.

The draft of a letter which he held in his hand, a copy of which had doubtless been sent to the person of whom she had implored assistance, announced a proud and resigned character, to whom the offer of alms would doubtless be revolting. How many precautions then, how many twistings, how many delicate "ruses" to conceal the source of a generous assistance, or to make her accept it!

And, besides, how much address to obtain admittance to the dwelling of this person, so as to judge whether she really deserved commiseration or not! Rodolphe foresaw a crowd of new emotions, curious and touching, which

must singularly amuse Madame d'Harville, as he had promised her.

"Well! my husband," said Rigolette gayly to Rodolphe, "what is that scrap of paper that you are reading there?" "My little wife," answered Rodolphe, "you are very curious! I will tell you by-and-by. Have you finished your purchases?" "Certainly, and your 'protégés' will be fixed like kings. Now you have only to pay. Madame Bouvard is easy to deal with—must be just." "My little wife, an idea! While I pay, if you would go and choose clothes for Madame Morel and her children?" "I acknowledge my ignorance on the subject of purchases. You will have them sent here: we will make but one journey, and our poor folks will thus have all at once."

"You are always right, my husband. Wait for me, I shan't be long. I know two shops where I am a regular customer; I will find there all I want." And Rigolette went out. But she returned to say:

"Madame Bouvard, I confide my husband to you; don't you look sweet at him, at least!" Another laugh, and she disappeared.

CHAPTER XV.

DISCOVERY.

"Must acknowledge, monsieur," said la Mère Bouvard to Rodolphe, after the departure of Rigolette, "that you have there a famous little manager. Peste! She understands how to buy; and besides, ain't she pretty! red and white, with large, fine, black eyes, and hair of the same colour." "Is she not charming, and am I not a fortunate husband, Madame Bouvard?" "As fortunate a husband as she is a wife, I am very sure."

"You are not deceived: but tell me how much I owe you?"

"Your little manager would not give more than three hundred and thirty francs for all. As there is only one 'bon Dieu,' I make but thirteen francs, for I have not bought these things as cheap as usual. I had not the heart to bargain for them; the people who sold them appeared too unhappy!"

"Truly? Are these the same persons from whom you also bought this little secretary?" "Yes, monsieur; ah! stop; that breaks my heart only to think of it! Just imagine that the day before yesterday there came here a lady still young and handsome, but so pale, so thin, that it gave one pain to see her. Although she was, as one would say, very neat in her appearance, her old rusty black shawl, her dress also black and all frayed, her straw hat in the month of January (she was in mourning) announced what we call genteel poverty, for I am sure that she is a lady very 'comme il faut'; well, she asked me, blushing, if I wished to buy two sets of bedclothes, and a little old secretary; I answered that, since I sold, I must buy; that if it suited me, it was a settled affair; but that I should wish to see the things. She begged me to come home with her, not far from here, the other side of the Boulevard, to a house on the quay of the Canal Saint Martin. I left my shop in charge of my niece; I followed the lady; we arrived at a house for 'small folks', as we say, right at the bottom of the court; we went up the fourth story, the lady knocked, a young girl of fourteen came to open the door; she was

also in mourning, and also very pale and thin; but in spite of that, beautiful as the morning; so beautiful that I remained speechless." "And this handsome young girl?"

"Was the daughter of the lady in mourning. Notwithstanding the cold, a poor dress of black and white cotton, and a little black shawl, well worn, was all she had on." "And their lodgings were miserable?" "Just figure to yourself, monsieur, two rooms very clean, but very empty, icy enough to freeze one to death; in the first place there was the fireplace, where not a spark was to be seen; there had been no fire there for a long time. As for furniture, two beds, two chairs, a commode, an old trunk, and the little secretary; on the trunk, a bundle in a handkerchief. This little bundle, it was all that remained to the mother and daughter, their furniture once sold. The landlord took the two bedsteads, chairs, trunk, and table, for what was due to him, as the porter told me as he came up with us. Then this lady begged me honestly to value the mattresses, sheets, curtains, and blankets. 'Foi! of an honest woman, monsieur, although my trade is to buy cheap, and sell dear, when I saw this poor young lady with her eyes full of tears, and her mother, who, in spite of her 'sang froid,' looked as if she was weeping within, I valued the things at fifteen francs more than I should have done, and this I swear to you. I even consented to take this little secretary, to oblige them, although it is not in my line." "I will buy it, Madame Bouvard." "Ma foi! so much the better, monsieur; it would have remained a long time on my hands. I told her, then, what I would give for these things. I expected she would have bargained, asked more. Ah, yes! it was thus again I saw she was no common person; genteel poverty, you may be certain, monsieur! I said then, 'It is so much.' She answered, 'It is well; let us return to your shop, you will pay me, for I shall never return to this house.' Then she said to her daughter, who wept, seated on the trunk, 'Claire, take the bundle.' The young lady got up; but on passing near the little secretary, she threw herself on her knees before it, and began to sob. 'Courage, my child, we are observed,' said the mother, in an under tone, which did not prevent me from hearing her. You conceive, monsieur, these are poor people, but as proud as that. When the lady gave me the key of the little secretary, I saw also a tear in her inflamed eye; her heart seemed to bleed at parting with this old piece of furniture, but she tried to be calm and dignified before strangers. In fine, she told the porter that I would come and take all but what the landlord kept, and we returned here, the young lady giving her arm to her mother, and carrying in her hand the little bundle containing all they possessed. I paid them their money, and I have not seen them since." "But their names?"

"I do not know; the lady sold me these things in the presence of the porter; I had no need to ask her name." "But their new address?" "I do not know this either." "I suppose they know it at their old lodgings?" "No, monsieur; when I returned there to get my things, the porter said, in speaking of them, 'they were very quiet people, very respectable, and very unfortunate; I hope no evil will happen to them! They appear to be very calm, but at the bottom, I am sure they are in a state of desperation.' And where are they going to lodge at this hour? I asked him. 'Ma foi! I don't know,' he answered;

'they have gone without telling me; very certain they will never return.'

The hopes that Rodolphe had for a moment conceived vanished. How to discover these two unfortunate females? having for guide only the name of Claire, and this fragment of a letter, on which was these words: "write to Madame de Lucenay." The sole and feeble chance of finding the traces of these unfortunates rested on Madame de Lucenay, happily of the circle of Madame d'Harville. "Here, madame, pay yourself," said Rodolphe, handing her a bill for five hundred francs. "I will give you the change, monsieur."

"Where shall we find a cart to carry our effects?"

"If it is not too far, a handbarrow will answer; there is one belonging to the pere Jerome, close at hand: what is your address, monsieur?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17." "Rue du Temple, No. 17? oh! well, well, I know where it is!" "You have been in this house?"

"Several times; in the first place, I have bought clothes of a pawnbroker who lives there; it is true, I don't like her trade, but that is none of my business; she sells, I buy; we are quits. Another time, not six weeks since, I went there for the furniture of a young man, who lived on the fourth floor, and who was breaking up." "M. Francois Germain, perhaps?" cried Rodolphe. "Exactly; you know him?" "Very well; unfortunately, he has not left his new address at the Rue du Temple, and I don't know where to find him." "If that's all, I can tell you." "You know where he lives?" "Not exactly, but I know where you will be sure to find him."

"And where's that?" "At the notary's, where he works." "A notary?" "Yes, who lives in the Rue du Sentier." "M. Jacques Ferrand?" cried Rodolphe. "Himself a very holy man; there is a crucifix and holy-box in his study; it smells just like a sacristy." "But how did you find out that M. Germain wrote at the notary's?" "It is quite a story. This young man came to propose to me to buy his furniture in a lot. This time, again, although it is not my business, I bought all, and afterward sold it here; since it was agreeable to the young man, I did not wish to refuse. I bought all then—good; I paid him—good; he was, no doubt, satisfied, for at the end of fifteen days he returned to buy some bedclothes. A porter, with his cart, came with him; they bundled all together—good; but just as he was going to pay, he perceived he had forgotten his purse. He looked like such an honest young man, that I said to him, 'Take away these things, never mind, I'll call at your lodgings for the money.' 'Very well,' said he, 'but I am never at home; come to-morrow, Rue du Sentier, at M. Jacques Ferrand's, notary, where I am employed, I will pay you.' I went there the next day; he paid me; only, what I thought droll was, that he should sell and buy again, all in fifteen days." Rodolphe imagined the reason of this singularity: Germain wished that all traces of him should be lost to the wretches who pursued him. He was overjoyed thinking of the happiness of Madame Georges, who was about to see again this son, so long and so vainly searched for. Rigolette soon returned, her eyes sparkling, and with a smiling face.

"Well, when I told you so!" cried she, "I was not mistaken. We have spent in all six hundred and forty francs, and the Morels will be established like princes. Look—look—see

the shopkeepers coming: Are they not laden? Nothing is wanting, everything is needful, even to a gridiron, two fine saucepans, and a coffee-pot." I said to myself: "Since they wish things done wholesale, let us do them wholesale; but pay quickly, my neighbour, and let us go. It is almost noon; and it must needs that my needle should travel at a famous rate to make up for this morning!" Rodolphe paid, and left the Temple with Rigolette. * * * * *

CHAPTER XVI.

APPARITION.

At the moment that the grisette and her companion entered in the "allée" of their house, they were almost overturned by Madame Pipelet, who ran against them, troubled, bewildered, lost. "Ah, mon Dieu!" said Rigolette. "What is the matter, then, Madame Pipelet? Where are you running to?" "Is it you! Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried Anastasia: "it is the 'bon Dieu' who sends you. Aid me to save Alfred's life." "What do you say?" "The poor old darling has fainted, have pity on us! run and get two sous worth of absinthe at the rogomistes—the strongest—it is his remedy when he is indisposed. Indigestion, perhaps; it will bring him to; be charitable, do not refuse me; I will return to Alfred. I am struck all of a heap." Rigolette dropped Rodolphe's arm and ran to the rogomistes. "But what has happened, Madame Pipelet?" asked Rodolphe, following the "portière," who returned to the lodge.

"Is it that I know, my worthy monsieur? I had gone to the mayor's, to the church, and to the 'traiteurs,' to save Alfred these trots. I came back; what do I see? the old darling keeled up!! Look, Monsieur Rodolphe," said Anastasia, opening the door of her den; see if it is not enough to break one's heart! Lamentable spectacle! Always 'coiffe' with his 'chapeau tromblou,' more 'coiffe' even than usual, for the dubious beaver, violently 'enfoncé,' (to judge from a transverse fracture) concealed the eyes of M. Pipelet, who was seated on the ground, with his back against the foot of his bed. The fainting fit had passed away; Alfred began to make some slight signs with his hands, as if he wished to repulse some one or something; then he tried to rid himself of his visor improvisée.

"He kicks! it is a good sign! he comes to!" cried the portière, and, stooping down, she screamed in his ears, "What is the matter, my Alfred? It is your Stasia who is here. How do you feel? They have gone for some absinthe; that'll bring you on your feet." Then, assuming a soft and most caressing voice, she added, "Have they, then, wounded, assassinated the dear old darling of his mamma, hein?"

Alfred uttered a profound sigh, and allowed to escape from him in the shape of a groan, this prophetic word: "Cabrio!"

And his trembling hands seemed anew to reproduce a frightful vision.

"Cabrio! this beggar of a painter again!" cried Madame Pipelet. "Alfred dreamed so much about him last night, that he almost kicked me to death. This monster is his nightmare! Not only he empoisons his days, but he

* Head dressed. † Pushed over his eyes

poisons his nights; he pursues him even in his sleep; yes, monsieur, as if Alfred was a criminal; and that this Cabrion, whom the devil confounded, was his bitter conscience." Rodolphe smiled discreetly, anticipating some new joke of the former neighbour of Rigolette. "Alfred! answer me; don't be dumb; you frighten me," said Madame Pipelet; "come, be yourself again; why do you think of that bully! you know very well that, when you think of him, it has the same effect that cabbage has upon you—it rests on your stomach, and that suffocates you."

"Cabrion!" repeated M. Pipelet, raising with an effort his hat from off his eyes, which he rolled around him with a bewildered look.

Rigolette came in, bringing a little bottle of absinthe.

"Thank you, *mamselle*, you are very kind!" said the old woman; and then she added, "Here, old darling, sip this for me, it will bring you up again." And Anastasia, placing quickly the bottle to the lips of M. Pipelet, undertook to make him swallow the absinthe.

Alfred would have contested vigorously, but his wife, profiting by the weakness of his victim, held his head with a firm hand, and with the other introduced the neck of the bottle between his teeth, and forced him to drink; after which she cried triumphantly, "Come, now! there you are again on your legs, old darling!" In effect, Alfred, after having wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, opened his eyes, arose, and asked, in a frightened tone,

"Have you seen him?" "Who?" "Is he gone?"

"But who? Alfred!" "Cabrion!" "Has he dared!" cried the portière. M. Pipelet, as mute as the statue of the commander in Don Giovanni, nodded, like the spectre, twice in the affirmative.

"M. Cabrion has been here?" asked Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "This monster, is he not let loose after Alfred!" cried Madame Pipelet; "oh, if I had been here with my broom, he should have eaten it, handle and all. But speak, then, Alfred; tell your misfortunes!"

Pipelet made a sign with his hand that he was about to speak.

The man with the chapeau tromblon was listened to in a religious silence; he expressed himself as follows, in a voice profoundly affected: "My wife had just left me to go to spare me the fatigue, according to the commands of monsieur (he bowed to Rodolphe), to the mayor's, the church, and the *traiteurs*." "The old darling has had the nightmare all night." "I preferred to go myself," said Anastasia.

"This nightmare was sent me as a warning from above," answered the porter, religiously. "I had dreamed of Cabrion. I should suffer from Cabrion. The day had commenced by an attack on the body of my wife." "Alfred, Alfred, hush now! this makes me feel ashamed before everybody," said Madame Pipelet, mincing, bridling, and casting down her eyes as if ashamed. "I thought I had paid my debt of misfortune to this day of misfortune, after the departure of the luxurious malefactors," continued M. Pipelet, "when, oh! *mon Dieu!* *mon Dieu!*" "Come, Alfred, courage!" "I will have it," answered M. Pipelet, heroically: "It is necessary; I will have it. I was then seated tranquilly at my table, reflecting on a change which I wished to operate on the upper

leather of this boot, confided to my industry, when I heard a noise—a slight rubbing on the window of my lodge." "Was it a presentiment? A notice from above? My heart ceased to beat. I raised my head, and through the glass I saw—I saw—"

"Cabrion!" cried Anastasia, clasping her hands.

"Cabrion!" answered M. Pipelet, gloomily. "His hideous face was there, plastered against the window, looking at me with his cat eyes. What did I say? Tigers, just as in my dream. I wished to speak; my tongue clove to my mouth. I tried to get up. I stuck to my seat, my boot fell from my hands; and as in all the critical and important events of my life, I remained completely immovable. Then the key turned in the lock, the door opened—Cabrion entered!" "He entered? What boldness!" cried Madame Pipelet, as much astounded as her husband, at this audacity.

"He entered slowly," continued Alfred, "stopped a moment at the door, as if to fascinate me with his atrocious glance; then he advanced towards me, stopping at each step, piercing me with his eye, without saying a word, straight dumb, menacing as a phantom."

"It makes my hair stand on an end!" said Anastasia.

"I remained more and more immovable and seated on my chair. Cabrion still advanced slowly, keeping his eye on me like a snake on a bird; for he caused me no fear, and yet in spite of myself I looked at him. He came close to me. I could no longer support his revolting aspect—it was too much, I could not stand it. I shut my eyes. Then I felt that he dared to put his hands on my hat; he took it by the crown, took it slowly from my head, and left it bare. I began to be seized with a vertigo—my respiration was suspended—my ears began to sing. I was more and more stuck fast to my seat. I shut my eyes tighter and tighter. Then Cabrion stooped down, took my bald head, that I have the right, or rather, had the right to call venerable before this outrage—he took, then, my head between his cold hands, cold as the dead—and on my forehead, glazed with sweat, he imprinted a brazen kiss! the lascivious wretch!"

Anastasia threw her arms towards heaven.

"My most mortal enemy to come and kiss me on the forehead! to force me to submit to his disgusting caresses, after having odiously persecuted me for a lock of my hair! Such a monstrosity made me think deeply, and paralyzed me. Cabrion profited by my stupor to place my hat on my head, then with a blow he pushed it over my eyes, as you have seen. This last outrage upset me: the measure was full; everything went round, and I fainted at the moment when I saw him, from under my hat, go out of the lodge as tranquilly and slowly as he had entered it." Then, as if this recital had exhausted his strength, M. Pipelet fell back on his chair, raising his hands towards heaven in an attitude of mute imprecation.

Rigolette went out hastily; her courage was at an end, her desire to laugh exhausted her; she could restrain herself no longer.

Rodolphe had himself with difficulty retained his composure.

All at once a confused noise, which announced the arrival of a crowd, resounded in the street; a great tumult was heard at the door of the *allée*, and soon the sound of muskets rang on the pavement of the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ARREST.

"Mon Dieu! Monsieur Rodolphe," cried Rigolette running in pale and trembling, "there is a police officer and a guard there!"

"Divine justice watches over me!" said M. Pipelet, in a burst of religious gratitude; "they come to arrest Cabrion; unfortunately, it is too late!" A police officer, recognisable by the scarf which was to be seen under his black coat, entered the lodge. His countenance was grave and severe. "Monsieur, the police officer, it is too late—the malefactor has escaped!" said M. Pipelet, sadly; "but I can give you his description—an atrocious smile—impudent stare—manners." "Of whom do you speak?" asked the officer. "Of Cabrion, monsieur officer. But, by making haste, perhaps you will catch him," answered M. Pipelet. "I do not know who Cabrion is," said the officer, impatiently. "One Jérôme Morel, journeyman jeweller, does he live in this house?"

"Yes, my officer," said Madame Pipelet, making the motion of "carry arms." "Conduct me to his room." "Morel, the workman!" answered the portière, much surprised; "but he is a real lamb of the bon Dieu—he is incapable of—"

"Jérôme Morel! does he live here or not?" "He lives here, with his family, in a garret." "Conduct me to this garret!"

Then, speaking to a man who accompanied him, he said.

"Let the two municipal guards wait here, and send Justin for a hack. Now conduct me to the Morels." "If it is all the same to you, my officer, I will take Alfred's place; he is indisposed from the assaults of Cabrion, who, like cabbage, sits hard on his stomach." "You, or your husband, no matter which. Come!" And, preceded by Madame Pipelet, he began to mount the stairs; but he soon stopped, seeing he was followed by Rodolphe and Rigolette. "Who are you? what do you want?" asked he. "They are the two lodgers of the fourth story!" answered Madame Pipelet. "Pardon, monsieur, I did not know that you belonged to the house," said he to Rodolphe.

He, anguring well from the polite manners of the officer, said to him, "You are going to see a desperate family, monsieur. I do not know what new blow menaces this unhappy artisan, but he has been cruelly tried this night.—One of his daughters, already overcome by illness, is dead—under his eyes—dead of cold and misery."

"Can it be possible?" "It is the truth, monsieur," said Madame Pipelet. "Except for the gentleman who now speaks to you, and who is the prince of lodgers, since he has saved by his benefactions the poor Morel from prison, all the family of the artisan would be dead with hunger." The officer regarded Rodolphe with as much interest as surprise. "Nothing is more simple, monsieur," he answered. "A very charitable lady, knowing that Morel, whose honour and probity I'll answer for, was in a condition as deplorable as it was unmerited, has charged me to pay a note for which the bailiffs were about to drag to prison this poor workman, sole support of a numerous family."

In his turn, struck with the noble features of Rodolphe, and with the dignity of his manners, the officer replied, "I do not doubt the honesty of Morel; I regret only that I have to fulfil a

painful duty before you, monsieur, who are so much interested in this family."

"What do you mean to say, monsieur?" "I avow to you, monsieur, it is the arrest of Louise Morel that is in question."

The rouleau of gold that she had offered to the bailiffs came to the mind of Rodolphe. "Of what is she accused, mon Dieu?" "She is accused of infanticide." "She! she! Oh, her poor father!" "From what you have told me, monsieur, I conceive that, under the circumstances in which the artisan is placed, this new blow will be terrible for him. Unfortunately, I must obey my orders." "But it is only a simple accusation!" cried Rodolphe. "The proofs are wanting, without doubt?" "I cannot explain myself farther on this subject. Justice has been informed of this crime, or, rather, the presumption, by the declarations of a man in every way respectable—the master of Louise Morel."

"Jacques Ferrand the notary!" said Rodolphe, indignantly.

"Yes, monsieur. But why this vivacity?" "M. Jacques Ferrand is a scoundrel, monsieur!" "I see with pain that you do not know of whom you speak. M. Jacques Ferrand is the most honourable man in the world; of most exemplary piety, and known probity." "I repeat to you, monsieur, that the notary is a scoundrel. He wished to imprison Morel because his daughter repulsed his infamous propositions. If Louise is only accused on the testimony of such a man—acknowledge, monsieur, that it merits but little belief."

"It does not belong to me, monsieur, and it does not suit me to discuss the value of the testimony of M. Ferrand," said the officer, coldly. "Justice has taken cognizance of the affair; the tribunals will decide. As to me, I have orders to arrest Louise Morel, and I shall do it."

"You are right, monsieur. I regret that a movement of indignation, perhaps legitimate, has made me forget that this is neither the time nor place for such a discussion. One word alone: the body of the child he has lost is in the garret. I have offered my room to this family, to spare them the sad sight of the corpse; it is, then, probably in my chamber you will find the artisan and his daughter. I conjure you, monsieur, in the name of humanity, do not arrest Louise suddenly in the midst of these misfortunes. Morel has gone through so many shocks this night that his reason will give way; his wife is also dangerously sick, such a blow will kill her. If you will permit me, I'll ask you a favour. This is what I propose: The young girl who follows us with the portière occupies a room adjoining mine; I do not doubt but that she will place it at your disposal. You can at first send for Louise; then, if it must be, for Morel, that his daughter may bid him farewell. You will at least spare a poor, sick, and infirm mother a heart-rending scene." "If this can be arranged so, monsieur, willingly." This conversation had taken place in an under tone, while Rigolette and Madame Pipelet held themselves discreetly at some distance off. Rodolphe descended, and said to the former, "My poor neighbour, I must ask another favour: you must let me have your room at my disposal for an hour." "As long as you please, M. Rodolphe. You have my key. But, mon Dieu! what is the matter, then?" "I will tell you directly. This is not all: you must be kind

enough to return to the Temple, to tell them to delay sending home our purchases for an hour."

"Willingly, M. Rodolphe; but is there a new misfortune happened to the Morels?"

"Alas! yes; you will only know it too soon."

"Come, my neighbour, I fly to the Temple. Mon Dieu! I, who, thanks to you, thought them out of trouble," said the grisette, and she descended rapidly the stairs.

Rodolphe wished to spare Rigolette the sad spectacle of the arrest of Louise. "My officer," said Madame Pipelet, "since my prince of ledgers accompanies you, I can go and find Alfred! He alarms me: he has hardly recovered from his indisposition of—Cabrio!"

"Go—go!" said the magistrate; and he remained alone with Rodolphe. Both arrived on the landing-place of the fourth, opposite the door of the room where the artisan and his family were temporarily placed.

Suddenly this door was opened. Louise, pale and weeping, came out quickly. "Adieu! adieu! my father," cried she; "I will return—I must go now." "Louise! my child, listen to me, then," answered Morel, following his daughter, and trying to detain her. At the sight of Rodolphe and the magistrate, they remained immovable.

"Ah! monsieur, you, our saviour," said the artisan, recognising Rodolphe; "aid me, then, to prevent Louise from going. I do not know what is the matter with her, she makes me afraid; she wishes to go away. Is it not so, monsieur, that she must not return any more to her master? Did you not say, 'Louise shall quit you no more—this shall be your recompense.' Oh! at this delightful promise, I avow it, for a moment I have forgotten the death of my poor little Adèle; but to be separated from you, Louise, never! never!" Rodolphe felt himself overcome; he had not the strength to utter a word. The officer said severely to Louise, "Do you call yourself Louise Morel?" "Yes, monsieur!" answered the young girl, amazed. Rodolphe had opened the chamber of Rigolette. "You are Jérôme Morel, her father?" added the magistrate, addressing the artisan.

"Yes—monsieur! but—" "Enter there with your daughter." And the magistrate pointed to the chamber of Rigolette, where Rodolphe already was. Reassured by his presence, the artisan and Louise, astonished and troubled, obeyed; the officer shut the door, and said to Morel, with emotion, "I know your honesty and misfortunes; it is, then, with regret I inform you that, in the name of the law, I come to arrest your daughter." "All is discovered—I am lost!" cried Louise, throwing herself in the arms of her father.

"What do you say? what do you say?" said Morel, stupefied. "Are you mad? why lost? arrest you! why arrest you? who will arrest you?" "I—in the name of the law!" and the officer showed his scarf. "Oh! unfortunate! unfortunate that I am!" cried Louise, falling on her knees.

"How! in the name of the law?" said the artisan, whose mind began to wander; "why arrest my daughter in the name of the law? I answer for Louise, I—she is my daughter, my worthy daughter—is it not true, Louise? How arrest you, when our guardian angel restores you to us, to console us for the death of my little Adèle? Come now! it cannot be! And, besides, monsieur, speaking with respect, only criminals are arrested, do you understand—and

Louise, my daughter, is not a criminal. Very sure, do you see, my child, this gentleman is mistaken. My name is Morel; there are more Morels besides me. You are called Louise—there are more of the same name. That's it, do you see, monsieur; there is a mistake!"

"Unfortunately, there is no mistake! Louise Morel, say farewell to your father." "You carry away my daughter, you!" cried the workman, furious from grief, and advancing towards the magistrate with a threatening air. Rodolphe seized him by the arm, and said, "Calm yourself, and hope; your daughter shall be returned to you—her innocence shall be proved; she is doubtless not culpable." "Culpable of what? she can be culpable of nothing—I would place my hand in the fire that—" Then recollecting the gold that Louise had brought to pay the note, Morel cried, "But this money! this money! Louise!" and he cast on his daughter a terrible look. Louise understood it. "I steal!" cried she, and the cheeks coloured with generous indignation, her tone of voice, her gesture, satisfied her father:

"I knew it!" he cried. "Do you see, monsieur—she denies it—and never in her life has she fled. I swear it to you. Ask every one who knows her, and they will say the same. She lies! ah! well! yes—she is too proud for that; besides, the bill was paid by our benefactor. This gold, she don't want it; she was going to return it to the person who lent—is it not so, Louise?"

"Your daughter is not accused of theft," said the magistrate.

"But, mon Dieu! what is she accused of, then? I, her father, I swear that, whatever she is accused of, she is innocent; and in my life, also, I have never lied." "What good will it do to know what she is accused of?" said Rodolphe to him; "her innocence shall be proven—the person who interests herself so much in you will protect your daughter. Come, courage. This time, again, Providence will not fail you. Embrace your daughter—you will soon see her again." "Monsieur 'le commissaire'!" cried Morel, without listening to Rodolphe, "a daughter is not taken away from a father without at least telling him of what she is accused! I wish to know all. Louise, will you speak?" "Your daughter is accused—of infanticide," said the magistrate. "I—I—do not comprehend—I—you—" "Your daughter is accused of having killed her child," said the officer, much overcome at this scene. "But it is not yet proved that she has committed this crime."

"Oh! no, it is not so, monsieur, it is not so," cried Louise with force, and raising herself up. "I swear to you it was dead! It breathed no more; it was frozen; I lost all consciousness; that is my crime. But to kill my child, oh! never!" "Your child, wretch!" cried Morel, raising his hands to Louise, as if he wished to annihilate her with this gesture and terrible imprecation. "Pardon, my father! pardon!" cried she. After a moment of frightful silence, Morel went on with a calmness still more frightful. "Monsieur, take away this creature; she is not my child."

He wished to go out; Louise threw herself at his knees, which she embraced with both arms, and, with face upward, frantic, and supplicating, she cried, "My father! listen to me only; listen to me!"

"Officer, take her away then; I abandon her

to you," said the artisan, making every effort to disengage himself from the embraces of Louise.

"Listen to her!" said Rodolphe, stopping him; "do not be now without pity. 'She! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!—she!' repeated Morel, burying his face in his hands, 'she dishonoured! oh! infamous! infamous!'" "And if she is dishonoured to save you?" whispered Rodolphe. These words made a startling impression on Morel; he looked at his weeping child, still kneeling at his feet; then interrogating her with a look impossible to describe, he cried in a hollow voice, his teeth grinding with rage, "The notary?"

An answer came to the lips of Louise. She was about to speak, but, on reflection, she stopped, bent her head, and remained silent.

"But no—he wished to imprison me this morning," continued Morel; "it is not he? oh! so much the better! so much the better! she has no excuse for her fault; I can curse her without remorse!" "No! no! do not curse me, my father! to you I will tell all; to you alone; and you will see—you will see if I do not deserve your pardon." "Listen to her for the sake of pity!" said Rodolphe. "What can she tell me? her infamy? it will soon be public; I will wait."

"Monsieur!" cried Louise to the magistrate, "in mercy let me say a few words to my father before leaving him, perhaps forever. And before you also, our saviour, I will speak—but only before you and my father." "I consent!" said the magistrate.

"Will you, then, be insensible? will you refuse this last consolation to your child?" asked Rodolphe. "If you think you owe me some return for the favours I have directed towards you, grant the prayer of your daughter." After a moment of mournful silence, Morel answered, "Let us go!" "But where shall we go?" asked Rodolphe; "your family is in the next room." "Where shall we go?" cried the artisan, with bitter irony; "where shall we go? up there—up there, in the garret, alongside of the body of my child. The place is well chosen for this confession—is it not? Come—we will see if Louise will dare to lie in the sight of the corpse of her sister. Come!" And Morel went out precipitately, with a wild stare, without looking at Louise.

"Monsieur!" whispered the officer to Rodolphe, "do not prolong this interview. You said truly, his reason will not sustain it; just now his look was that of a madman." "Alas! monsieur, I fear, like you, a terrible and new misfortune; I will shorten as much as possible the touching 'adieux.'" And Rodolphe rejoined the artisan and his daughter.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONFESSION.

DARK and gloomy spectacle!

In the middle of the garret, such as we have described it, reposed, on the couch of the idiot, the corpse of the little child. An old piece of sheet covered it. Rodolphe, standing with his back to the wall, was painfully affected. Morel, seated on his work-bench, his head down, hands hanging, his looks fixed, wild, were con-

stantly fixed on the bed where reposed the remains of the little Adèle.

At this sight, the anger, the indignation of the artisan became weaker, and changed into a sadness of inexpressible bitterness; his energy abandoned him; he sunk under this new blow. Louise, of a mortal paleness, felt her strength fail her. The revelation that she was about to make frightened her. Yet she took tremblingly the hand of her father—that poor, thin hand, deformed by excess of labour.

He did not withdraw it. Then his daughter, bursting into tears, covered it with kisses, and soon felt it press lightly against her lips. The anger of Morel had ceased; his tears, for a long time retained, flowed at last. "My father! if you knew—if you knew how much I am to be pitied." "Oh! stop; you see, this will be the grief of all my life, Louise—of all my life," answered the artisan, weeping. "You, Mon Dieu! you in prison—on the criminal bench—you, so proud—when you had the right to be so. No!" continued he, in a new access of desperate grief, "no! I should prefer to see you under the winding-sheet alongside of your poor little sister." "And I also; I wish it were so," answered Louise. "Hush, unfortunate child, you give me pain. I was wrong to say that; I went too far. Come, speak, but, in the name of God, tell the truth. However frightful it may be, tell me all. If I hear it from you it will appear less cruel to me. Speak; alas! our moments are counted; you are waited for. Oh! the sad, sad parting, just heaven!" "My father, I will tell you all," said Louise, resolutely; "but promise me, and you, our benefactor, promise also, not to repeat, this to any one. If he knew that I had spoken, do you see—oh! you would be lost—lost like me; for you do not know the power and ferocity of this man." "Of what man." "My master." "The notary?"

"Yes," said Louise, in a low tone, and looking around her, as if she were afraid of being overheard. "Compose yourself," answered Rodolphe. "This man is cruel and powerful; no matter; we will combat him. Besides, if I reveal what you are about to tell us, it will be only in your interest or in that of your father."

"And I also, Louise, if I speak, it will be to try to save you. But what has he done, this wicked man?" "This is not all," said Louise, after a moment's reflection, "in this sad tale it will be questioned if some one who has rendered me a great service—who has been for my father and for our family full of kindness—this person was employed at M. Ferrand's when I went; I have sworn not to mention the name."

Rodolphe, thinking that she meant Germain, said,

"If you mean François Germain, be easy; his secret will be kept by your father and myself."

Louise looked at Rodolphe with surprise. "You know him?" said she. "How! the good and excellent young man who lived here for three months, and was employed at the notary's when you went there?" said Morel. "The first time you saw him here you appeared not to know him." "That was agreed upon between us. He had grave reasons to conceal that he worked for M. Ferrand. It was I who told him

of the chamber on the fourth story, knowing he would be a good neighbour for you." "But," said Rodolphe, "who placed your daughter with the notary?" "When my wife was taken sick, I had said to Madame Burette, the pawnbroker, who lives here, that Louise wished to go to service to aid us. Madame Burette knew the housekeeper of the notary; she gave me a letter to her, in which she strongly recommended Louise. Cursed—cursed be that letter; it has caused all our misfortunes. So, monsieur, this is the way my daughter went there." "Although I am informed of some of the facts which have caused the hatred of M. Ferrand towards your father," said Rodolphe to Louise, "I beg you will relate to me in a few words what passed between you and the notary since you entered his service. This may serve to defend you."

"During the first months of my stay at M. Ferrand's I had no reason to complain of him. I had much work to do; the housekeeper was often very rough towards me; the house was gloomy; but I endured all with patience; servitude is servitude, otherwise I should have had other disagreements. M. Ferrand had a stern look. He went to mass; he often received priests. I did not mistrust him. At first he hardly looked at me. He spoke very cross to me; above all, in the presence of strangers."

"Except the porter who lodged on the street, in the building where the office is, I was the only domestic with Madame Seraphin, the housekeeper. The building we occupied was an old isolated ruin, between the court and garden. My chamber was quite up to the top. Very often I was afraid to remain alone all the evening, either in the kitchen, which was underground, or in my chamber. In the night, I sometimes thought I heard extraordinary noises in the room under mine, which no one occupied, and where M. Germain alone often came to work during the day. Two of the windows of this story were walled up, and one of the doors, very thick, was strengthened with bars of iron. The housekeeper told me afterward that M. Ferrand kept his strong box there."

"One night I had sat up very late to finish some mending, which was very urgent; I was about to go to bed, when I heard some one walking very softly in the corridor at the end of which was my chamber; they stopped at my door; at first I thought it was the housekeeper, but as she did not come in, it made me afraid; I dared not stir; I listened; no one stirred; I was, however, sure there was some one behind the door; I asked twice who was there—no one answered. More and more alarmed, I pushed my commode against the door, which had neither lock nor bolt. I still listened—nothing stirred; at the end of half an hour, which appeared very long, I threw myself on my bed: the night passed tranquilly. The next morning I asked the housekeeper for permission to put a bolt on my door, as there was no lock, relating to her my fears of the last night; she answered that I had dreamed, that I must speak to M. Ferrand about it; at my demand he shrugged his shoulders, and told me I was a fool: I did not dare to say anything more."

"Some time after this happened the affair of the diamond. My father, almost desperate,

knew not what to do. I related his trouble to Madame Seraphin; she answered, 'Monsieur is so charitable, that perhaps he will do something for your father.' The same evening I waited on table; M. Ferrand said to me, bluntly, 'Your father has need of thirteen hundred francs; go this night and tell him come to my office to-morrow; he shall have the money. He is an honest man, and deserves that one should interest himself for him.' At this act of kindness I burst into tears; I did not know how to thank my master; he said to me, in his ordinary rough manner, 'It is well, it is well; what I have done is very simple.' In the evening I came to tell the good news to my father, and the next day—" "I had the money, against a bill at three months date, accepted in blank by me," said Morel. "I did like Louise; I wept with gratitude; I called him my benefactor, my saviour. Oh! he must needs have been very wicked to destroy the gratitude and veneration I vowed to him."

"This precaution to make you sign a bill in blank, at such a date that you could not pay it, did not awaken your suspicions?" asked Rodolphe. "No, monsieur; I thought that the notary only took it for security; besides, he told me I need not think of paying it under two years; every three months it should be renewed for the sake of being regular; yet, at the end of the first term, it was presented, and not being paid, he obtained a judgment against me under another name; but he told me not to be troubled, that it was an error of his clerk." "He wished thus to have you in his power," said Rodolphe.

"Alas! yes, monsieur; for it was from the date of this judgment he began to— But continue, Louise, continue. I do not know where I am. My head turns. I shall become mad! it is too much—too much!" Rodolphe soothed him, and Louise continued: "I redoubled my zeal to show my gratitude. The housekeeper then held me in great aversion; she often placed me in the wrong by not repeating the orders that M. Ferrand gave her for me; I suffered from this, and would have preferred another place; but the obligation of my father to my master prevented my leaving. It was now three months since he had lent the money; he continued to scold me before Madame Seraphin, yet he looked at me sometimes, behind her back, in such a manner as to embarrass me, and he smiled in seeing me blush." "You comprehend, monsieur, he was then about to obtain a judgment against me." "One day," continued Louise, "the housekeeper went out after dinner, as was her custom; the clerks had left the office; they lodged elsewhere. M. Ferrand sent the porter on an errand; I remained in the house alone with my master; I was working in the antechamber; he rang for me. I entered his room; he was standing before the fireplace; I drew near; he turned quickly, and took me by the arm. I was alarmed. I ran into the antechamber and shut the door, holding it with all my strength; the key was on his side." "You understand, monsieur. You hear," said Morel to Rodolphe, "the conduct of this worthy benefactor." "At the end of a few moments the door yielded to his efforts," continued Louise. "I blew out the light—he

called me. I made no answer. He then said, in a voice trembling with rage, 'If you conduct thus, I will send your father to prison for the money he owes and cannot pay.' I begged him to have pity on me; promised to do everything I could to serve him, and show my gratitude, but I declared nothing could induce me to degrade myself." "Yes; this is the language of Louise," said Morel, "of my Louise, when she had the right to be proud. But how! Continue—continue." * * * * *

"The next morning after this scene, in spite of the threats of my master, I came here and told my father all. He wished to make me leave the house at once—but there was the prison. The little that I earned was indispensable to the family, since the illness of my mother; and the bad character which M. Ferrand threatened to give me would prevent my seeking or obtaining another place for a long time, perhaps."

"Yes," said Morel, with great bitterness, "we had the cowardice, the selfishness, to let our child return there. Oh! I told you truly, poverty, poverty, how many crimes it causes to be committed!" "Alas! my father; did you not try all means to obtain the money? that being impossible, we had to submit." "Go on, go on, continue. Your parents have been your executioners; we are more culpable than you are," said the artisan, concealing his face in his hands.

"When I saw my master again," said Louise, "he acted towards me as usual, cross and harshly; he said not a word of the past; the housekeeper continued to torment me; she hardly gave me enough to eat, looked up the bread; sometimes, out of wickedness, she would defile the remains of the dinner before my eyes, for she always ate with M. Ferrand. At night I hardly slept; I feared at each moment to see the notary enter my room; he had taken away the commode with which I had barricaded my door; there only remained a chair, a little table, and my trunk; I always retired to bed dressed. For some time he left me tranquil; he did not even look at me. I began to be at ease, thinking that he thought no more of me. One Sunday he allowed me to go out; I came to announce this good news to my parents. We were all very happy! It is up to this moment you have known all, 'mon pere.' What remains to tell," and the voice of Louise trembled, "is frightful! I have always concealed it from you."

"Oh! I was very sure of it—very sure that you concealed a secret from me," cried Morel, with a kind of wandering and a singular volubility of expression which astonished Rodolphe. "Your pallor, your expression, should have enlightened me. A hundred times I have spoken to your mother; but, bah! bah! bah! she always repelled me! Look at us well! look at us! To escape a prison, leave our daughter at this monster's! And our child, where does she go to? On the criminal bench! Ah! but also—in fine—who knows! exactly—because one is poor—yes—but the others! bah! bah! the others." Then stopping, as if to collect his thoughts, Morel struck himself on the forehead, and cried, "Stop! I do not know what I

say. My head pains dreadfully. It seems to me I am drunk." And he concealed his face in his hands.

Rodolphe, not wishing to let Louise see how much he was alarmed at the incoherent language of her father, said, gravely, "You are not just; Morel; it was not for herself alone, but for her mother, for her children, for yourself, that your poor wife feared the consequences of Louise leaving the notary. Accuse no one. Let all the maledictions, all your hatred, fall on one man—on this monster of hypocrisy, who placed a girl between dishonour and ruin; the death, perhaps, of her father and his family; on this master, who abused in an infamous manner his power as a master. But patience, I have told you Providence often reserves for great crimes a surprising and frightful vengeance."

The words of Rodolphe were stamped with such force and conviction, in speaking of this providential vengeance, that Louise looked at him with surprise, almost with fear.

"Continue, my child," said he; "conceal nothing; this is more important than you think." "I began, then, to feel somewhat of security," said Louise, "when one night M. Ferrand and his housekeeper both went out, each their own way. They did not dine at home; I remained alone. As usual, they left me some bread and water, and wine; my work finished, I dined, and then, fearing to remain alone in the apartments, I went up to my own room, after having lighted M. Ferrand's lamp. When he went out at night no one waited for him. I began to sew, and, as was very unusual, by degrees sleep overpowered me. Ah! my father!" cried Louise, "you will not believe me—you will accuse me of falsehood; and yet, on the corpse of my little sister, I swear I tell you the truth." "Explain yourself," said Rodolphe. "Alas! monsieur, for seven months I sought in vain to explain to myself this frightful night. I have almost lost my reason in trying to explore this mystery."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the artisan, "what is she going to say?" "I was, contrary to my custom, asleep on my chair," continued Louise. "This is the last thing I recollect. Before—before—oh! my father, pardon. I swear to you I am not culpable." "I believe you! I believe you! but speak!" "I do not know how long I slept, but when I awoke I was still in my chamber, but—" * * * * *

"Oh! the wretch! the wretch!" cried Rodolphe. "Do you know, Morel, what he gave her to drink?" The artisan looked at Rodolphe, but made no reply. "The housekeeper, his accomplice, had put in the drink of Louise a soporific, opium, without doubt; the strength, the senses of your child have been paralyzed for some hours; when she awoke from this lethargic sleep the crime was committed."

"Ah! now," cried Louise, "my misfortune is explained; do you see, my father, I am less culpable than I appear to be. My father! father! answer me then!"

The look of the artisan was of a frightful vagueness.

Such horrible perversity could not be understood by this honest and simple-hearted man. He could hardly comprehend the frightful reve-

lation. And, besides, it must be said, that for some moments his reason had deserted him; at each moment his ideas became more obscure; then he fell into that vacuity of thought which is to the mind what night is to the sight: formidable symptoms of mental alienation. Yet Morel answered in a quick, dull, and mournful tone, "Oh! yes, it is very wicked, very wicked, wicked."

And he fell back into his apathy. Rodolphe looked at him with anxiety; he thought that the intensity of indignation began to be exhausted with him; the same as after violent griefs tears are often wanting. Wishing to terminate as soon as possible this sad conversation, Rodolphe said to Louise,

"Courage, my child; finish to unveil this tissue of horrors."

"Alas! monsieur, what you have heard is nothing as yet." * * * *

"Ah! all precautions were taken to conceal his enormity!" said Rodolphe.

"Yes, monsieur, and I was ruined. To all that he said to me I could find no answer. Ignorant what drink I had taken, I could not explain my long sleep. Appearances were against me. If I complained, every one would condemn me; it must be so, for to me all was an impenetrable mystery."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CRIME.

RODOLPHE remained confounded at the detestable villany of M. Ferrand. "Then," said he to Louise, "you did not dare to complain to your father of the odious conduct of the notary?"

"No, monsieur; I feared he would have thought me the accomplice instead of the victim; and, besides, I feared that, in his anger, my father would forget that his liberty, the existence of his family, depended entirely upon my master."

"And was his conduct less brutal towards you afterward?"

"No, monsieur; to drive away suspicion, when by chance he had the Curé of Bonne Nouvelle and his vicar to dinner, my master addressed me before them with severe reproaches; he prayed the curé to admonish me; he said that sooner or later I should be lost; that my manners were too free with his clerks; that I was idle; that he kept me out of charity for my father, an honest man with a family, whom he had served. All this was false. I never saw the clerks; they were in a separate building from us." "And when you found yourself alone with M. Ferrand, how did he explain his conduct towards you before the curé?" "He assured me that he joked. But the curé took these accusations for serious; he told me severely that one must be doubly vicious to act thus in a holy house, where I had religious examples continually under my eyes. To that I did not know what to answer; I held down my head, blushing; my silence, my confusion, turned still more against me; my life was such a burden that several times I was on the point of destroying myself; but I thought of my father, my mother, my brothers and sisters, whom

I helped to support. I resigned myself; in the midst of my degradation I found a consolation; at least, my father was saved from prison. A new misfortune overwhelmed me; I was encephalic. I saw myself altogether lost. I do not know why, I had a presentiment that M. Ferrand, in learning an event which should have rendered him less cruel towards me, would increase his bad treatment; I was, however, far from supposing what would happen."

Morel recovered from his momentary aberration, looked around him with astonishment, passed his hand over his face, collected his thoughts, and said to his daughter,

"It seems to me I have forgotten myself for a moment—fatigue, sorrow. What did you say?" "When M. Ferrand was informed of my situation—" The artisan made a movement of despair; Rodolphe calmed him with a look.

"Go on, I will listen to the end," said Morel. "Go on, go on." Louise resumed. "I asked M. Ferrand by what means I should conceal my shame. * * * *

Interrupting me with indignation, and a feigned surprise, he pretended not to understand me; he asked me if I were mad; frightened, I cried, 'but, mon Dieu, what do you wish to become of me now? If you have no pity on me, have, at least, some pity on your child!' 'What a horror!' cried he, raising his hands towards heaven. 'How, wretch! you have the audacity to accuse me of being corrupt enough to descend to a girl of your class! you have effrontery enough to accuse me! I, who have a hundred times repeated before the most respectable witnesses that you would be ruined, vile débauchée! Leave my house this moment—I drive you.'"

Rodolphe and Morel remained horror-struck; such infernal hypocrisy overpowered them: "Oh! I confess," said Rodolphe, "this passed all conception." Morel said nothing; his eyes became enlarged in a fearful manner; a convulsive spasm contracted his features; he descended from the bench where he was seated, opened quickly a drawer, and took out a strong and very sharp file, with a wooden handle, and rushed towards the door.

Rodolphe, divining his thoughts, seized him by the arm and stopped him. "Morel, where are you going to? You will ruin yourself, unfortunate man!" "Take care!" cried the artisan, furiously, struggling. "I shall commit two crimes instead of one!" and the madman threatened Rodolphe.

"My father, it is our saviour!" cried Louise.

"He is mocking us! bah! bah! he wishes to save him, the notary!" answered Morel, completely wild, and contending with Rodolphe. At the end of a second, he succeeded in disarming him, opened the door, and threw the instrument on the staircase. Louise ran to the artisan, held him in her arms, and said, "Father, he is our benefactor! you have raised your hand on him; come to yourself!"

These words recalled Morel to himself; he covered his face with his hands, and, without saying a word, he fell at Rodolphe's feet. "Raise yourself, unfortunate father," said Rodolphe, kindly. "Patience—patience; I understand your fury, I partake of your hatred; but, in the name even of your vengeance, do not compromise it."

"Mon Dieu! *mon Dieu!*" cried the artisan, raising himself up. "But what can justice—the law—do in such a case? Poor as we are! when we go and accuse the powerful, rich, and respected man, they will laugh in our face, ah, ah, ah!" and he laughed convulsively. "And they will be right. Where are our proofs? yes, our proofs? They will not believe us. Therefore, I tell you," cried he, in another storm of madness, "I tell you I have no confidence but in the impartiality of the knife."

"Silence, Morel; grief makes you wander," said Rodolphe, suddenly. "Let your daughter speak; the moments are precious, the magistrate awaits; I must know all—I tell you, all. Continue, my child." "It is useless, monsieur," said Louise, "to speak to you of my tears, my prayers; I was disregarded. This took place at ten o'clock in the morning, in the cabinet of M. Ferrand; the curé was to breakfast with him that morning; he entered at the moment my master was loading me with reproaches and outrages: he appeared much vexed at the sight of the priest." "And what did he say then?" "He soon made up his mind what course to pursue; he cried, pointing to me, 'Well! Monsieur l'Abbé, I said truly that this creature would be ruined. She is lost—lost forever; she has just acknowledged to me her fault and her shame, begging me to save her. And to think that I, through pity, have received such a wretch into my house!' 'How,' said the abbé to me, with indignation; 'in spite of the salutary councils which your master has given you so often before me, you have thus degraded yourself! Oh! this is unpardonable.' 'My friend, after the kindness you have shown her and her family, pity would be a weakness.' 'Be inexorable,' said the abbé, a dupe, like everybody else, of the hypocrisy of M. Ferrand."

"And you did not at once unmask the scoundrel?" said Rodolphe. "Mon Dieu! monsieur, I was terrified, my head turned; I dared not, I could not pronounce a word; yet I wished to speak, to defend myself. But, monsieur, I cried—'Not a word more, unworthy creature,' said M. Ferrand, interrupting me; 'you have heard M. l'Abbé. Pity would be weakness: in an hour you leave my house.' Then, without giving me time to answer, he led the abbé into another room."

"After the departure of M. Ferrand," continued Louise, "I was for a moment, as it were, delirious. I saw myself driven from his house, not able to get another place, on account of my situation and the bad character my master would give me. I did not doubt but that in his anger he would imprison my father. I did not know what would become of me; I went, for refuge and to weep, to my chamber. At the end of two hours M. Ferrand appeared. 'Is your trunk ready?' said he. 'Mercy!' I cried, falling at his feet, 'do not send me away in the state in which I am; what will become of me! I can find no other place!' 'So much the better; God will thus punish your conduct and your lies.' 'You dare to say I lie!' cried I, indignantly; 'you dare to say you are not the cause of my ruin!' 'Leave my house at once, you infamous creature, since you persist in your calumnies,' cried he, in a terrible voice. 'And to punish you, to-morrow I will imprison

your father!' 'Well! no, no!' said I, aghast, 'I will accuse you no longer, monsieur—I promise it; but do not drive me away—have pity on my father; the little that I earn here supports my family. Keep me here—I will say nothing—I will conceal everything as long as I can, and then—you can send me away.'

"After renewed supplications, M. Ferrand consented to my prayers; I regarded it as a great favour, so frightful was my condition. Yet, for the five months which followed this cruel scene, I was very unhappy, very cruelly treated; sometimes only M. Germain, whom I saw but seldom, interrogated me with kindness on the subject of my sorrows; but shame forbade my confession."

"Is it not about this time that he came to live here?"

"Yes, monsieur, he wished for a room near the temple or the arsenal; there was one to be let here; it suited him." "And you never thought of confiding your sorrows to M. Germain?" asked Rodolphe. "No, monsieur, he was also a dupe of M. Ferrand's; he said he was hard and exacting, but he thought him the most honest man in the world. I passed these five months in tears, in continual agony; with care, I had concealed my situation from all eyes, but I could hope to do so no longer. The future was for me most dreadful; M. Ferrand had declared he would not keep me any longer with him. I was thus about to be deprived of the small resource that aided our family to live. Cursed, driven away by my father; for, after the falsehoods that I had told him to dissipate his suspicions, he would not believe me to be the victim of M. Ferrand. What was to become of me? where was I to fly? where to find a refuge? I had, then, a very wicked idea. I confess this, monsieur, because I wish to conceal nothing, even that which may cast suspicion on me, and also to show you to what an extremity I was reduced by the cruelty of M. Ferrand. If I had yielded to a fatal thought, would he not have been an accomplice of my crime?"

After a moment's silence, Louise resumed with an effort, and in a trembling voice, "I had heard from the 'portière' that a quack lived in the house—and—" She could not finish.

Rodolphe remembered that at his first interview with Madame Pipelet he had received from the postman, in the absence of the "portière," a letter written on coarse paper, in a disguised hand, and on which he had remarked the traces of tears. "And you did write him, unhappy child—three days since! On this letter you have wept; your writing was disguised." Louise looked at Rodolphe with affright. "How do you know, monsieur?"

"Calm yourself. I was alone in the lodge of Madame Pipelet when this letter was handed in, and it was my chance to receive it." "Well! yes, monsieur; in this letter, without signature, I wrote to M. Bradamanté, that, not daring to come to him, I begged he would meet me that evening near the Chateau d'Eau. I was half crazy. I wished to ask his fearful advice. I left my master's house to meet him; but my reason returned; I regained the house, I did not see him. Thus a scene took place, from the consequences of which I am now suf-

fering.—M. Ferrand believing me gone out for two hours, while after a very short time I returned.

"In pacing before the little door of the garden, to my great astonishment I saw it open; I entered that way, and I carried the key to the cabinet of M. Ferrand, where it was ordinarily kept. This was next to his bedchamber, the most retired place in the house; it was there he gave his secret audiences. You will see, monsieur, why I give you these details: knowing all the ways of the house very well, after having crossed the dining-room, which was lighted, I entered into the saloon in the dark, then to the cabinet, as I said before. The door of his chamber opened at the moment I placed the key on the table. Hardly had my master perceived me by the light which was burning in his chamber than he closed the door quickly on a person whom I could not see; then he threw himself on me, seized me by the throat as if he wished to strangle me, and said to me in a low tone, at once furious and alarmed, 'You were spying; you listened at the door! what did you hear? Answer, answer! or I'll strangle you.' But, changing his mind without giving me time to say a word, he pushed me backward into the dining-room: the office was open; he threw me into it brutally, and locked the door."

"And you heard nothing of his conversation?"

"Nothing, monsieur; if I had known he had anybody in his room, I should have taken care not to have entered the cabinet; he forbade even Madame Seraphin to do so." "And when you came out of the office, what did he say to you?" "It was the housekeeper who came to conduct me, and I did not see him again that night. The alarm I had experienced had made me very ill. The next morning, as I came down stairs, I met M. Ferrand. I shuddered in thinking of his threats of the evening previous: what was my surprise when he said to me, almost calmly, 'You know I forbid any one to come into my cabinet when I have some one in my chamber; but for the short time that you have to remain here it is useless to scold any more;' and he passed into his office. This moderation surprised me, after the violence of the previous evening. I went on with my usual duties; I went to put in order his sleeping apartment. In arranging some clothes in a dark closet near the alcove, I was suddenly taken very ill; I felt that I was about to faint. In falling, I grasped at a cloak which was hanging against the wall. I dragged it along with me; it covered me completely as I lay upon the floor. When I came to myself, the glass door of this closet was shut. I heard the voice of M. Ferrand. He spoke very loud. Recollecting the scene of the previous evening, I thought myself killed if I stirred; I supposed that, concealed under the mantle which had fallen on me, my master, in shutting the door, had not perceived me. If he discovered me, how could I make him believe that my presence was accidental? I held my breath, and, in spite of myself, I heard the end of this conversation, which doubtless had been commenced for some time.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CONVERSATION.

"And who was the person who was talking with him?" asked Rodolphe.

"I am ignorant, monsieur; I did not know the voice."

"And what did they say?"

"The conversation had lasted for some time, doubtless, for this is all I heard. 'Nothing can be plainer,' said this unknown voice; 'a queer fish, called Bras-Rouge, a determined smuggler, has brought me, for the affair I have just spoken about, in connexion with a family of fresh-water pirates, who are established at the point of a little island near Asnières; they are the greatest bandits in the land: the father and grandfather have both been guillotined, two of the sons are to the galleys for life; but the mother, three sons, and two daughters are left, all as great villains one as the other. It is said that at night, to rob on both sides of the Seine, they come down in their boats sometimes as far as Bercy. They are folks who will kill the first come for a crown; but we have no need of them; it suffices if they will give hospitality to your country lady. The Martials (this is the name of my pirates) will pass in her eyes for an honest family of fishermen; I will go on your account, and make two or three visits to your young lady; I will order her certain potions, and at the end of eight days she will make acquaintance with the cemetery of Asnières. In the villages, a death passes like a letter through the postoffice, while at Paris they scrutinize too closely. But when will you send your country girl to the island, so that I can advise the Martials what part they have to play?'"

"She will arrive to-morrow, and the day after she will be there," answered M. Ferrand; "and I will inform her that the Doctor Vincent will take care of her on my account." "Agreed for the name of Vincent," said the voice; "I like that as well as any other."

"What is this new mystery of crime and infamy?" said Rodolphe, more and more surprised.

"New? no, monsieur; you will see that it has reference to a crime that you do know," answered Louise, and she continued: "I heard the movement of chairs; the conversation was at an end. 'I do not ask you to be secret,' said M. Ferrand; 'you hold me as I hold you.' 'That proves that we can serve, but never injure one another,' answered the voice; 'see my zeal! I received your letter last night at ten o'clock, this morning I am here; farewell, accomplice; do not forget the island of Asnières, the fisher Martial, and the Doctor Vincent. Thanks to these three magical words, your country girl has only eight days left.' 'Stop,' said M. Ferrand, 'while I go and unbolt the door of my cabinet, and see if there is any one in the antechamber, that you may go out by the garden as you came in.' M. Ferrand went out a moment, and then returned, and finally I heard him go off with the unknown person. You may imagine my alarm, monsieur, during this conversation, and my horror at knowing such a secret. Two hours after this conversation, Madame Seraphin came to seek me in my cham-

ber, where I had gone more trembling and sick than I had yet been. 'Monsieur wants you,' said she; 'you have more good luck than you deserve; come, descend. You are very pale; what you are going to learn will give you more colour.'

"I followed Madame Seraphin; M. Ferrand was in his cabinet. At seeing him I shuddered in spite of myself, yet he had a less wicked look than usual; he looked at me fixedly for a long time, as if he wished to read my thoughts. I cast down my eyes. 'You appear very ill,' said he. 'Yes, monsieur,' I answered, astonished that he did not address me familiarly as usual. 'It is very plain,' added he, 'it is in consequence of your situation; but notwithstanding your lies, your bad conduct, and your indiscretion of yesterday,' added he, in a softened tone, 'I have pity on you. Although I have treated you as you deserved before the curé of the parish, such an affair as this will be a scandal to my house; and, moreover, your family will be in despair. I consent, under these circumstances, to come to your assistance.' 'Ah! monsieur,' I cried, 'these words of kindness on your part make me forget all!' 'Forget what?' asked he, sharply. 'Nothing, nothing; pardon, monsieur,' answered I, fearing to irritate him, and believing in his professions of pity. 'Listen to me,' said he; 'you will go to see your father to-day; you will announce to him that I am going to send you for two or three months in the country to take charge of a house I have just bought; during your absence I will send him your wages. To-morrow you will leave Paris; I will give you a letter of recommendation for Madame Martial, the mother of a family of honest fishermen who live near Asnières. You will require to say you came from the country, nothing more. Later you will know the object of this letter, all for your interest. Madame Martial will treat you as her child; a physician, a friend of mine, Doctor Vincent, will take you under his charge. You see how good I am for you!'"

"What a horrible plot!" cried Rodolphe; "now I comprehend all. Believing that the evening previous you had become possessed of a secret of great importance to him, he wished to get rid of you. He had probably some interest in deceiving his accomplice, in representing you as a girl from the country. What must have been your affright at this proposition?" "It was a great blow! I was completely bewildered; I knew not what to answer; I looked at M. Ferrand with affright; my mind wandered. I was about, perhaps, to risk my life in telling him that I had overheard his projects in the morning, when, happily, I recollected the new dangers to which this would expose me. 'You do not comprehend me, then?' asked he, with impatience. 'Yes, monsieur; but,' said I, trembling, 'I prefer not to go to the country.' 'Why not? You will be perfectly well taken care of, where I shall send you.' 'No, no, I will not go; I prefer to remain in Paris, near my family; I had rather confess all, die with shame, if it is necessary.' 'You refuse me!' said M. Ferrand, restraining his anger, and looking at me with attention. 'Why have you changed your mind so quickly? Just now you accepted.' I saw that if

he suspected me, I was lost; I answered that I did not think that he meant me to leave Paris and my family.' 'But you will dishonour your family, wretch,' cried he; and not being able any longer to contain himself, he seized me by the arm, and pushed me so violently that I fell. 'I give you until after to-morrow,' cried he; 'to-morrow you shall leave this to go to the Martials, or to tell your father I have sent you away, and that he goes the same day to prison.' I remained alone stretched on the earth; I had not the strength to get up. Madame Seraphin came, and with her assistance I regained my chamber. I threw myself on my bed; I remained there until night.

* * * * *

"Amid the horrors of this frightful, solitary night, I had a moment of bitter joy: it was when I pressed my child in my arms." And the voice of Louise was suffocated with her tears. Morel had listened to the story of his daughter with an apathy, a silent indifference which alarmed Rodolphe.

Yet, seeing her in tears, he looked at her fixedly, and said,

"She weeps—she weeps: why, then, does she weep? Oh yes; I know, I know—the notary. Continue, my poor Louise; you are my child. I love you still—just now I did not know you; my tears obscured my sight. Oh! mon Dieu! my head—my head—it gives me great pain." "You see I am not culpable; is it not so, father?" "Yes, yes." "It is a great sorrow—but I feared the notary so much!" "The notary? oh! I believe you—he is so bad—so wicked!" "You pardon me now?" "Yes." "Truly?" "Yes, truly. Oh, I love you still—go—although—I cannot—say—do you see—because—oh! my head! my head!" Louise looked at Rodolphe with alarm.

"He suffers; let him compose himself. Continue."

"I pressed my child to my heart. I was astonished not to hear it breathe, but I said to myself, the respiration of so small a child can hardly be heard; and yet it seemed to me that it was very cold. I had no light. I waited until dawn, trying to warm it as well as I could. At daylight I found it was stiff—icy. I placed my hand on its heart: it did not beat—it was dead."

And Louise burst into bitter sobs.

"Oh! at this moment," continued she, "thoughts passed impossible to describe. I remember it confusedly as a dream; it was at once despair, terror, anger, and, above all, I was seized with another alarm; I no longer dreaded that M. Ferrand would strangle me, but I feared that if my child was found dead at my side, I should be accused of having killed it; then I had but one thought, that of concealing it from all eyes; in that way, my dishonour would not be known; I would no longer have to dread the anger of my father; I should escape the vengeance of M. Ferrand; then I could leave his house, procure another place, and continue to earn something towards the support of my family. Alas! monsieur, such are the reasons which induced me to acknowledge nothing, to conceal the body of my child from all eyes. It was wrong, certainly; but the position I was in, overwhelmed on all sides,

crushed by long sufferings, almost delirious, I did not reflect to what I exposed myself, if I was discovered."

"What tortures! what tortures!" said Rodolphe, overcome.

"Daylight increased," continued Louise: "in a short time every one would be awake in the house. I hesitated no longer. I wrapped up my child as well as I could; I descended very softly; I went to the end of the garden to make a hole in the ground to bury it; but it had frozen all night—the earth was too hard. Then I hid the body at the bottom of a kind of cellar where no one entered in winter. I covered it with an empty flower-box, and I returned to my room without seeing any one. Of all I tell you, monsieur, I have but a confused idea. Feeble as I was, I can as yet hardly comprehend how I had the face to do all this. At nine o'clock, Madame Séraphin came to know why I was not yet up. I said, that I was so ill, that I begged her to let me remain in bed all day; the next day I would quit the house, since M. Ferrand sent me away. At the end of one hour he came himself. 'You are worse; this is the consequence of your self-will,' said he: 'if you had profited by my offers, to-day you would have been established with kind people, who would have taken every care of you; however, I will not be so inhuman as to let you suffer; to-night, Doctor Vincent will come to see you.' At this threat I shuddered with fear. I answered that I was wrong the night before to refuse his offers; that I accepted them; but that, as yet being too ill to leave, I would go the next day but one to the Martials', and that it was useless to send for Doctor Vincent. I only wished to gain time; I was decided to leave the house, and to go to my father. I hoped in this manner he would be ignorant of all. But, deceived by my promise, M. Ferrand was almost affectionate towards me, and recommended me, for the first time in his life, to the care of Madame Séraphin.

"I passed the day in mental agony, trembling at each moment that chance would cause a discovery of the body of my child. I only desired one thing—that the cold might cease, so that I might be able to dig a grave. It snowed—that gave me hopes. I remained all day in bed. The night being come, I waited until every one was asleep. I had strength to get up, to go to the woodpile to look for a hatchet to cut some wood, to make a hole in the frozen ground. After infinite trouble, I at last succeeded: they took the body, I wept again over it, and I buried it as I could, in the little flower-box. I did not know the prayer for the dead; I said a pater and an ave, praying the bon Dieu to receive it into his paradise. I thought my courage would have failed me when I covered it with the earth. A mother! interring her child! At length I succeeded. Oh! what it cost me, mon Dieu! I placed the snow over the grave, so that nothing should be seen. The moon gave me light. When all was finished I could not make up my mind to come away. Poor little thing! in the frozen ground—under the snow. Although it was dead, it seemed to me that it must feel the cold. At length I returned to my chamber. I went to my bed with a violent fever. In the morning M. Ferrand sent to know

how I was. I answered that I felt rather better, and that I should certainly be ready to leave for the country the next day. I remained all this day still in bed, in order to gain strength. In the evening I arose. I went to the kitchen to warm myself. I remained late, all alone. I went to the garden to say a last prayer. At the moment I ascended towards my chamber, I met M. Germain on the landing-place of the cabinet, where he sometimes worked; he was very pale. He said to me, quickly, placing a rouleau in my hand, 'Your father will be arrested early to-morrow morning; here is the money: as soon as it is day, run to his house. It is only to-day I have found out M. Ferrand; he is a bad man; I will unmask him. Do not, above all, say that you have this money from me;' and M. Germain, not giving me time to thank him, descended the stairs quickly."

CHAPTER XX.

MADNESS.

"This morning," continued Louise, "before any one was up, I came here with the money, but it was not sufficient; and, without your generosity, he would not have escaped the bailiffs. Probably, after my departure, some one has gone to my room and discovered some traces which has led to this discovery. A last service I ask of you, monsieur," said Louise, drawing out the rouleau of gold from her pocket: "will you hand this money to M. Germain? I promised him not to tell any one that he was employed at M. Ferrand's, but, since you know it, I have not been indiscreet. Now, monsieur, I repeat, before God, who hears me, and before you, I have not said a word that is not true. I have not sought to—" But, interrupting herself suddenly, Louise, much alarmed, cried, "Monsieur! look at my father! look at him! what is the matter with him?" Morel had listened to the last part of this narrative with sombre indifference, which Rodolphe had explained to himself, by attributing it to the overwhelming grief of this unhappy man; after so many violent shocks, so oft repeated, his tears were dried up, his sensibility blunted—he has not even strength enough left to vent his indignation, thought Rodolphe. He was mistaken. Like the flickering light of a lamp about to expire, the reason of Morel, already strongly shaken, vacillated for some time, showed forth now and then some last rays of intelligence, and then suddenly became obscured.

Absolutely a stranger to what was said, to what passed around him, for some moments the artisan had become mad!

Although his wheel was placed the other side of his work-table, and he had in his hands neither diamonds nor tools, the artisan, attentively occupied, imitated his ordinary occupations. He accompanied this pantomime with a kind of rolling noise with his tongue, making a noise like the wheel when in operation. "But, monsieur," said Louise, with increased alarm, "look at my father!" Then approaching him, she said, "Father! father!"

Morel looked at his daughter with that vacant stare so peculiar to lunatics. Without

ceasing for a moment his imaginary occupation, he answered, in a soft and mournful voice, "I owe thirteen hundred francs to the notary, the price of Louise's blood. I must work, work, work! Oh, I will pay, pay—will pay!" "Mon Dieu, monsieur, but this is not possible! this cannot last! he is not altogether mad, is he?" cried Louise, in a heart-rending tone. "He will come to himself—it is only a momentary—"

"More! my friend!" said Rodolphe, "we are here. Your daughter is alongside of you; she is innocent."

"Thirteen hundred francs," said the artisan, without looking at Rodolphe, and continuing his imaginary occupation. "Father!" cried Louise, throwing herself at his feet, and taking hold of his hands, "it is I, Louise!" "Thirteen hundred francs," repeated he, endeavouring to disengage himself from Louise; "thirteen hundred francs; or else," added he, in a low and confidential tone, "or else Louise is guillotined;" and he began to turn his wheel. Louise uttered a piercing cry. "He is mad!" cried she; "he is mad! and it is I, it is I, who am the cause! Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Yet it is not my fault; I did not wish to do wrong: it is this monster!"

"Come, poor child, courage!" said Rodolphe, "let us hope. This madness will be but momentary. Your father has suffered too much; his reason has become weakened: he will get better."

"But my mother—my grandmother—my brothers and sister! what will become of them?" cried Louise. "See, they are deprived of both my father and myself. They will die with hunger, with poverty and despair!" "Am I not here! Be calm, they shall want for nothing. Courage! I pray you; your revelation will cause the punishment of a great criminal. You have convinced me of your innocence; it shall certainly be known and acknowledged." "Ah! monsieur, you see dishonour—madness—death: these are the evils he has caused—this man! nothing can be done to him—nothing! Ah! this thought completes all my troubles!" "Far from that; let a contrary thought aid you in supporting them." "What do you say, monsieur?" "Carry with you the certainty that you shall be avenged." "Avenged!"

"Yes! and I swear to you," answered Rodolphe, with solemnity, "I swear to you that, his crimes proved, this man shall severely expiate the dishonour, madness, and death he has caused. If the laws are powerless, if his cunning and address equal his misdeeds, to his cunning shall be opposed cunning; to his misdeeds, misdeeds; but which shall be to them what the just and avenging punishment, inflicted on the culpable by an inexorable hand, is to the cowardly and concealed murder." "Ah! monsieur, may God hear you! It is not myself I wish to revenge, it is my crazy father; it is—" then, turning to her father, she cried, "Father, farewell! They take me to prison—I shall never see you more! it is your Louise who bids you farewell—father! father! father!"

At this touching appeal, nothing responded; nothing responded in this poor annihilated mind—nothing. The paternal cords, always the

last broken, vibrated no more.

The door of the garret opened, and the officer entered.

"My moments are counted, monsieur," said he to Rodolphe: "I declare to you, with regret, that it is impossible for me to wait any longer." "The conversation is terminated, monsieur," answered Rodolphe, bitterly, pointing to the artisan. "Louise has nothing more to say to her father—he has nothing more to hear from his daughter—he is mad." "Grand Dieu! just what I feared! Ah! it is frightful!" cried the magistrate. And, approaching quickly to the artisan, after a moment's examination, he was convinced of the sad reality. "Ah! monsieur," said he, sadly, to Rodolphe: "I have already made sincere wishes that the innocence of this young girl may be proved. But, now, I will not confine myself to wishes; no, no: I will tell of this last dreadful blow, and, do not doubt it, the judges will have a motive the more to find her innocent." "Well, well, monsieur," said Rodolphe, "in acting thus, it is not only your duty you fulfil, but you are performing a worthy part." "Believe me, monsieur, some of our missions are so painful, that it is with happiness, with gratitude, that we interest ourselves in what is good and virtuous." "One word more, monsieur: the revelations of Louise Morel have evidently proved to me her innocence. Can you inform me how her pretended crime has been discovered, or, rather, denounced?" "This morning," said the magistrate, "a woman in the employ of M. Ferrand, notary, came, and declared to me that, after the precipitate flight of Louise Morel, who she knew was 'en-cemte,' she had gone up into the chamber of this young girl, and that she had there found traces of an 'accouchement clandestin;' after some investigations, some footsteps in the snow had led to the discovery of a new-born child interred in the garden."

"On the relation of this woman, I went to the Rue de Sentier. I found M. Jacques Ferrand very indignant that such a thing should have occurred in his house. M. Le Curé, of the Church of Bonne-Nouvelle, whom he had sent for, also declared to me that the girl, Morel, had acknowledged her fault before him, one day, that she had implored the pity and indulgence of her master, and that, still more, he had often heard M. Ferrand give Louise Morel the most severe reprimands, predicting that, sooner or later, she would be ruined. 'A prediction which had just been realized so unfortunately,' added the abbé. The indignation of M. Ferrand," continued the magistrate, "appeared to me so real, that I partook of it. He told me that, without doubt, Louise Morel had taken refuge at her father's. I came here at once; the crime being flagrant, I had the right to proceed to an immediate arrest."

Rodolphe restrained himself in hearing the indignation of M. Ferrand spoken of: he said to the magistrate,

"I thank you a thousand times, monsieur, for your kindness, and for the assistance you tender Louise; I shall conduct this unfortunate man to a lunatic hospital, as well as the mother of his wife." Then, addressing Louise, who, yet kneeled before her father, trying, in vain,

to restore him to reason: "Be resigned, my child, to go without embracing your mother: spare her this touching farewell. Be assured as to her welfare—nothing shall henceforth be wanting—I will find a woman who will take care of your mother, and your brothers and sister under the superintendence of your good neighbour, Mademoiselle Rigolette. As to your father, nothing shall be spared, that his cure shall be rapid and complete. Courage, then: believe me, virtuous people are often harshly tried by misfortunes, but they always come out of these struggles purer, stronger, and more respected." * * * * *

Two hours after the arrest of Louise, the artisan and the old idiot were, by the orders of Rodolphe, conducted by David to Charenton; they were to have chamber treatment, and receive particular care and attention. Morel left the house without resistance; indifferent, he went where they took him; his madness was inoffensive and sad. The grandmother had hunger; they showed her food, she followed this food.

The diamonds and rubies confided to the wife of the artisan were the same day given to Madame Mathieu, the broker, who came to get them. Unfortunately, this woman was watched and followed by Tortillard, who knew the value of the pretended false jewels, from the conversation he had overheard when Morel was arrested by the bailiffs. The son of Bras-Rouge ascertained that she lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11.

Rigolette informed Madame Morel, with much tact, of the lunacy of her husband, and the imprisonment of Louise. At first she wept much, uttering sorrowful cries; then, the first feelings of grief over, the poor creature, weak and unsettled, consoled herself, by degrees, in seeing herself and children surrounded by comforts which they owed to the generosity of their benefactor.

As to Rodolphe, his thoughts were bitter in thinking of the revelations of Louise. * * *

CHAPTER XXI.

JACQUES FERRAND.

At the time when the events passed which we relate, at one of the extremities of the Rue du Sentier could have been seen a long wall, much cracked, and covered with a coating of plaster, the top protected with pieces of broken glass; this wall, forming the boundary on this side of the garden of Jacques Ferrand, the notary, extended to a building situated on the street, of only one story and a garret. Two large escutcheons of gilded copper, a sign of a notary's office, flanked the worm-eaten "porte cochère," the primitive appearance of which was no longer to be distinguished under the mud which covered it. This door led to a covered passage; on the right was the lodge of an old porter, half deaf, who was to the fraternity of tailors what M. Pipelet was to the bootmakers; on the left a stable, which served the purposes of a cellar, wash-house, woodhouse,

and of a growing colony of rabbits, lodged in a manger by the porter, who consoled himself from the pangs of a recent bereavement, in the death of his wife, by raising these domestic animals.

Alongside the lodge was the crooked, narrow, and obscure staircase, leading to the office, as the clients were informed by a hand painted black, the fore-finger pointing to these words on the wall: *The office is on the first floor*. On one side of a large paved court, overgrown with grass, were to be seen the unoccupied carriage-houses; on the other, a rusty iron railing, which enclosed the garden; at the bottom the pavilion, where the notary alone dwelt.

A flight of eight or ten steps of tottering, disjointed stones, covered with moss and worn by time, led to this square pavilion, composed of a kitchen and other offices under ground, "à rez-de-chaussée,"* a first floor and an attic, where Louise had slept.

This pavilion appeared also in a great state of decay; immense cracks were to be seen in the walls; the windows and blinds, once painted gray, had become, with age, almost black; the six windows of the first story, looking upon the court, had no curtains; the glasses were almost incrustated with dirt; on the ground floor they were rather cleaner, and were hung with curtains of a faded yellow, with red flowers. On the side towards the garden the pavilion had but four windows; two were walled up.

This garden, overgrown with wild briars, seemed abandoned; not a single border, not a shrub; a cluster of elms, five or six large trees, some acacias and elders, a yellow grass-plot, walks encumbered with brambles, and bounded by a high wall; such was the sad "ensemble" of the garden and habitation of the notary.

To this appearance, or, rather, to this reality M. Ferrand attached great importance. In the eyes of the vulgar, a carelessness of comfort and prosperity passes almost always for disinterestedness; uncleanliness for austerity.

Comparing the grand financial luxury of some notaries, or the reported toilettes of their wives, to the gloomy mansion of M. Ferrand, so contemptuous of elegance and splendour, the clients felt a kind of respect; or, rather, of blind confidence for this man, who, from the number of his employers, and the fortune he was supposed to possess, could have said, like many of his brethren, *My equipage, my country house, my box at the opera, &c., and who, far from that, lived with great economy; thus, deposits, placing money at interest, legacies on trust, all those affairs, in fine, which depend upon the most tried integrity, or the most perfect good faith, flowed into the hands of M. Ferrand*. In living as he did, the notary consulted his taste. He detested society, pomp, pleasures dearly bought; had it been otherwise, he would have, without hesitation, sacrificed his most lively wishes to the appearances which it was important to give himself.

Some words on the character of this man.

He was a son of the grand family of misers.

Avarice is, above all, a negative, passive passion.

For Jacques Ferrand risked, and risked much.

* Ground floor.

He counted on his cunning—it was extreme; on his hypocrisy—it was profound; on his understanding—it was fertile and pliable; on his audacity—it was infernal—to assure impunity to his crimes, and they were already numerous.

One single passion, or rather appetite, but most disgraceful, ignoble, shameful, but almost ferocious, raised him often to phrensy.

Save this weakness, Jacques Ferrand loved but gold.

He loved gold for the sake of gold;

Not for the enjoyments it procured: he was stoical.

Notwithstanding his great cunning, this man had committed two or three errors which the most crafty criminals hardly ever escape from.

Forced by circumstances, it is true, he had two accomplices; this great fault, as he said himself, had been repaired in part; neither of his accomplices could betray him without betraying themselves; nor could any advantage be derived from their denouncing the notary and themselves to public vindictiveness. He was therefore on this head quite at rest

Some words now on the personal appearance of M. Ferrand, and we will introduce the reader into the study of the notary, where he will find the principal personages of this story. M. Ferrand had passed his fiftieth year: He did not appear more than forty; he was of a medium size, round-shouldered, square built, strong, thick set, red-haired, shaggy as a bear. His hair laid smooth on his temples, the top of his head was bald, his eyebrows hardly to be perceived; his bilious-looking skin was covered with large freckles; but when any lively emotion agitated it, this yellow, clayey visage filled with blood, and became a livid red.

His face was as flat as a death's head, as the vulgar say. His nose crushed down, and "punais;" his lips were so thin, so imperceptible, that his mouth seemed cut in his face; when he smiled in a wicked and sinister manner, the ends of his teeth could be seen, almost all black and decayed. Closely shaved to his temples, this man's countenance had an expression at once austere and sanctified, impassible and rigid, cold and reflecting; his little black eyes—quick, piercing, restless—were hidden by large green spectacles.

Jacques Ferrand had excellent sight, but under the shelter of his spectacles he had great advantage! to observe without being observed; he knew how much a glance of the eye is often and involuntarily significant. In spite of his imperturbable audacity, he had encountered, two or three times in his life, certain powerful looks, before which he had been forced to quail. Now, in some circumstances, it is fatal to cast down your eye before the man who interrogates, accuses, or judges you. The large spectacles of M. Ferrand were then a kind of covered breast-work, from whence he could attentively examine the manœuvres of the enemy; for many such he had to encounter, because many found themselves more or less his dupe.

He affected in his dress a negligence which

reached to uncleanness; or, rather, it was naturally rusty and mean; his face shaved every two or three days, his dirty bald head, his black nails, his old, snuff-coloured coats, his greasy hats, his threadbare cravats, his black woollen hose, his coarse shoes, recommended him singularly to his clients, in giving him an air of detachment from the world, and a perfume of practical philosophy which charmed them. "To what pleasures—what passions—could the notary," said they, "sacrifice the confidence which was shown him? He gained, perhaps, sixty thousand francs a year, and his household was composed of a servant and an old housekeeper; his sole pleasure was to go every Sunday to mass and vespers; he knew no opera comparable to the solemn sounds of the organ, no company which could equal an evening passed at his fireside with the curé of his parish, after a frugal dinner. Finally, he placed his delight in his probity, his pride in his honour, his happiness in his religion."

Such was the opinion of many concerning M. Jacques Ferrand, this good and excellent man!

CHAPTER XXII.

THE OFFICE.

THE office of M. Ferrand resembled all offices, his clerks all other clerks. It was reached by an antechamber furnished with four old chairs. In the office, properly so called, surrounded by shelves furnished with paper boxes, containing documents belonging to the clients of the notary, five young men, bending over desks of black wood, laughed, talked, or scribbled incessantly. An adjoining room, in which usually remained the first clerk, then an empty room, which, for the sake of secrecy, separated the cabinet of the notary from the other offices, such was the "ensemble" of this laboratory of all kinds and sorts. Two o'clock had just struck by an old cuckoo clock, placed between the two windows of the office; a certain agitation seemed to reign among the clerks: some fragments of their conversation will explain the cause of this commotion.

"Certainly, if any one had told me that François Germain was a robber," said one of the young men, "I should have answered, 'You are a liar!'" "And I also!" "And I also!" "I! it produced such an effect on me to see him arrested and taken away by the guard, that I could not eat my breakfast. I was recompensed, however, for it spared me from eating the daily mess of Mother Séraphin."

"Seventeen thousand francs—it is a sum!"

"A famous sum!" "And to say that for seventeen months since he has been cashier, he never has been wanting a centime in his cash account!"

"As for me, I think the 'patron' was wrong to arrest Germain, since the poor fellow swore that he had only taken thirteen hundred francs in gold." "Yes. And so much the more, that he brought back the amount this morning at the moment the patron had sent for the guard."

"That is the consequence of being of such a rigid probity as the patron. Such people are always without pity."

"Never mind; one ought always to think twice before ruining a poor young man who always conducted himself well until now."

"M. Ferrand would reply to that, 'it was for the sake of example.'"

"The example of what? It is of no use to those who are honest; and those who are not know well enough that they are likely to be discovered if they steal."

"The house is, however, a good customer for the officer."

"How?" "Dame; this morning the poor Louise; just now Germain." "As for me, the affair of Germain don't appear too clear."

"Since he has acknowledged it?" "He confessed that he had taken thirteen hundred francs—yes; but he maintained that he had not taken the remaining fifteen thousand francs in bank bills, and the remaining seven hundred francs that were missing."

"Exactly; since he acknowledged one thing, why not the other?" "It is true, one is as much punished for five hundred as for fifteen thousand francs." "Yes; but one keeps the fifteen thousand francs, and on coming out of prison that makes a nice little establishment, a rogue would say."

"Not so bad!" "One may well say there is something in that." "And Germain, who always defended the patron when we called him a Jesuit!"

"It is, nevertheless, true; why hasn't the patron a right to go to mass? he would say; you have the right to stay away."

"Stop, here is Chalomel; how he will be astonished!"

"About what? what? My good fellows, is there anything new concerning poor Louise?"

"You would have known, 'fiancé,' if you hadn't been absent so long." "Hold; you think it is only a 'pas de clerc'* from here to the Rue de Chaillot." "Oh! bad! bad!"

"Well! this famous Vicomte de Saint Rémy!"

"Has he not come yet?" "No."

"His vehicle was all ready, and his valet de chambre told me that he would come at once; but he did not appear pleased, the domestic said. Ah! gentlemen, here is a fine hotel; one might say it had belonged to the lords of the olden time, as is spoken of in *Fantasia*. Oh! Faublas! there is my hero! my model!" said Chalomel, putting away his umbrella and taking off his overshoes.

"I believe that he is in debt, and there are writs out against him, this viscount." "A writ for thirty-four thousand francs, which has been sent here, since it is here he must come to pay it; the creditor prefers it, why, I know not." "He must be able to pay it now, because he returned last night from the country, where he has been concealed for three days to escape the bailiffs."

"But why did they not levy on his furniture?"

"He is not such an ass! The house is not his; the furniture is in the name of his valet de chambre, who is looked upon as hiring him furnished lodgings, in the same way that his horses and carriages are in the name of his coachman, who says he lets them out to the

viscount at so much per month. Oh! he is cunning, this M. de Saint Rémy. But what is that you were talking about? has anything new happened here?"

"Just imagine—about two hours since, the patron came in here like a madman: 'Germain is not here!' cried he. 'No, monsieur.' 'Well! the scoundrel has robbed me, last night, of seventeen thousand francs!' continued the patron."

"Germain steal! Come, come, now."

"You shall see. 'How, sir! are you sure? but it is not possible!' we all cried."

"I tell you, gentlemen, that I put yesterday, in the bureau where he works, fifteen notes of a thousand francs, besides two thousand francs in gold in a small box: all has disappeared." At this moment the Père Marriton, the porter, came in and said, "Monstier, the guard is coming."

"And Germain?" "Stop a moment. The patron said to the porter, 'As soon as Germain comes send him here without telling him anything. I wish to confound him before you, gentlemen,' continued the patron. At the end of fifteen minutes poor Germain arrived, as if nothing was the matter; the Mère Séraphin came to bring us our breakfast: she saluted the patron, and said good-day to us very tranquilly. 'Germain, do you not breakfast?' said M. Ferrand. 'No, monsieur, I am not hungry, I thank you.' 'You come very late?' 'Yes, monsieur. I have been to Belleville this morning.' 'To conceal, doubtless, the money you have stolen from me,' cried M. Ferrand with a terrible voice."

"And Germain?" "Ah! the poor boy became pale as death, stammering, 'Monsieur, I beg you, I supplicate you, do not ruin me.'"

"He had stolen!" "Now do wait, Chalomel. 'Do not ruin me!' said he to the patron."

"You acknowledge then, wretch?" "Yes, monsieur; but here is the money that is wanting. I thought I should be able to return it this morning before you were up; unfortunately, a friend, who had a small sum of mine, and whom I thought to find at home last night, had been at Belleville for two days; I was obliged to go there this morning, which has caused my delay. Pardon me, monsieur, do not ruin me! In taking this money, I knew I could return it this morning. Here are the thirteen hundred francs in gold!"

"You have robbed me of fifteen notes, of one thousand francs each, that were in a green portfolio, and two thousand francs in gold!" "I never!" cried poor Germain. "I took the thirteen hundred francs, but not one sous more. I have seen no portfolio in the drawer; there was only two thousand francs in gold in a box." "Oh! the infamous liar!" cried the patron. "You have stolen thirteen hundred francs, you could well steal more; justice will decide. Oh! I shall be without pity for such a frightful breach of confidence. It will be an example." Finally, my poor Chalomel, the guard arrived, with an officer to make out a commitment; they carried him off, and that's all!"

"Can it be possible! Germain, the cream of honest people!"

"It has appeared to us quite as singular."

"After all, it must be confessed, Germain was reserved; he never would tell where he lived."

* This word has a double meaning: *pas de clerc*, a blunder; *pas de clerc*, step of a clerk.

"That is true." "He always had a mysterious air." "That's no reason why he should steal the money." "Doubtless. It is a remark I make."

"Ah! well, this is news! it is as if some one had given me a blow on the head—Germain—Germain—who looked so honest; whom one would have given to the 'bon Dieu' without confession!" "One would have said that he had a presentiment of his misfortune."

"Why?" "For some time past he looked as if something troubled him." "It was, perhaps, concerning Louise."

"Louise?" "Oh! I only repeat what Madame Séraphin said this morning."

"What then? what then?"

"That he was the lover of Louise, and the—"

"Ah! the cunning fellow."

"Stop, stop, stop!" "Ah, bah!"

"It is not true!" "How do you know that, Chalomel?" "It is not two weeks since, that Germain told me, in confidence, that he was dead in love with a little 'ouvrière,' who he had known in the house where he lived; he had tears in his eyes when he spoke to me about her."

"Oh! Chalomel! Chalomel!"

"He says that Faublas is his hero, and yet he is simple enough, stupid enough, not to comprehend that one can be in love with one and the lover of another."

"I tell you that Germain spoke seriously—"

At this moment the chief clerk entered the office.

"Well," said he, "Chalomel, have you finished all your errands?" "Yes, M. Dubois, I have been to M. de Saint Rémy; he will be here shortly to pay."

"And to Madame la Comtesse M'Gregor?"

"Likewise; here is the answer."

"And to the Countess de Orbrigny?"

"She is much obliged to the patron; she arrived yesterday from Normandy, she did not expect an answer so soon; here is her letter. I have also been to the intendant of the Marquis d'Harville, as he required, for the charges on the contract I signed the other day at the hotel."

"You told him that it was not pressing?"

"Yes, but he would pay it. There is the money. Ah! I forgot that this card was here, below, at the porter's; a word in pencil written underneath by the porter; this gentleman asked for the patron; he has left this:"

"WALTER MURRAY, read the chief clerk; and then in pencil, 'Will return at three o'clock, on important business.' I do not know this name."

"Ah! I forgot," continued Chalomel: "M. Badinot said it was good; that M. Ferrand should do as he pleased; that would be always right."

"He did not give a written answer?"

"No, monsieur, he said he hadn't time."

"Very well." "M. Charles Robert will also come in the course of the day to speak to the patron; it appears he fought a duel yesterday with the Duke of Lucenay." "Is he wounded?" "I believe not, or they would have told me of it at his house." "Look! here is a carriage stopping." "Oh! the fine horses, are they not mettlesome?" "And this fat English

coachman, with his white wig, and his brown livery, with silver lace, and his epaulettes like a colonel!" "It is an ambassador, surely." "And the chasseur, has not he enough of this silver lace?" "And grand mustaches!" "Hold!" said Chalomel, "it is the carriage of the Viscount de Saint Rémy." "Ain't it stylish? I thank you!" Soon afterward M. de Saint Rémy entered the office.

CHAPTER XXIII.

M. DE SAINT RÉMY.

WE have described the charming face, the exquisite elegance, the ravishing "tournure" of M. de Saint Rémy, arrived the previous evening from the farm of Arnouville, belonging to Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, where he had found a refuge from the bailiffs, Malicorne and Bourdère.

M. de Saint Rémy entered into the office hastily, his hat on his head, his manner haughty and proud, eyes half closed, asking, in a very impertinent way, without looking at any one, "The notary? where is he?"

"Monsieur Ferrand is busy in his office," answered the head clerk; "if you will wait a moment, monsieur, he will receive you." "How! wait?" "But, monsieur—" "There are no but monsieurs; go and tell him that M. de Saint Rémy is here. I find it very singular that this notary makes me wait in his antechamber; it smells of the store."

"Please to pass into the next room, monsieur," said the clerk; "I will go at once and inform M. Ferrand."

M. de Saint Rémy shrugged his shoulders, and followed the head clerk. At the end of a quarter of an hour, which seemed to him very long, and which changed his contempt into rage, M. de Saint Rémy was introduced into the cabinet of the notary. Nothing could be more curious than the contrast of these two men, both profound physiognomists, and generally accustomed to judge at a first glance with whom they had to deal.

M. de Saint Rémy saw Jacques Ferrand for the first time. He was struck with the character of this man, rigid, impassible face; the expression concealed by the large green spectacles, the head half buried in an old black silk cap.

The notary was seated before his desk in a leather arm-chair, alongside of a broken-down fireplace, filled with ashes, and in which were smoking two black stumps. Curtains of green muslin, almost in tatters, suspended from iron rods, concealed the lower part of the windows, and cast into this cabinet, already dark enough, a dull and disagreeable light. Shelves of black wood, filled with labelled boxes; some chairs of cherry wood, covered with yellow Utrecht velvet; a mahogany clock; a yellow, moist, and slippery floor; a ceiling filled with cracks and ornamented with garlands of spider-webs; such was the sanctum sanctorum of M. Jacques Ferrand.

The viscount had not advanced two steps, had not said a single word, before the notary, who knew him by reputation, hated him already. In the first place, he saw in him, thus to speak,

a rival in knavery; and then, although M. Ferrand was of a mean and ignoble appearance himself, he did not the less detest in others elegance, grace, and youth; above all, when an air supremely insolent accompanied these advantages.

The notary ordinarily affected a sort of rudeness, almost gross, towards his clients, who only felt more esteem for him for these manners of a peasant of the Danube. He promised himself to redouble this brutality towards the viscount.

He, knowing M. Ferrand only by reputation, expected to find in him a kind of scrivener, good-natured or ridiculous, the viscount figuring to himself always that men of proverbial probity must be kind of simpletons. Far from this, the physiognomy of the scrivener imposed on the viscount an undefinable feeling, half fear, half hatred, although he had no serious reason to fear or hate him. Thus, in consequence of his resolute character, M. de Saint Rémy increased his insolence and habitual foppishness of manner. The notary kept his cap upon his head; the viscount retained his hat, and cried from the door in a loud and sharp voice,

"It is, pardieu! very strange, monsieur, that you give me the trouble to come here, instead of sending to me for the money for the bills I have endorsed to this Badinot, and for which this fellow has sued me. You should not expose me to wait a quarter of an hour in your antechamber; that is not so polite as it might be, monsieur."

M. Ferrand, without paying the least attention, finished a calculation he was making, wiped his pen methodically on the sponge which lay near his inkstand, and raised towards the viscount his cold, earthly, and flattened face, encumbered with the green spectacles.

It looked like a death's head, whose eyes had been replaced by great, fixed, glassy sockets.

After having looked at him for a moment in silence, he said to the viscount in a rough, short tone, "Where is the money?"

This coolness exasperated M. de St. Rémy.

He—he! the idol of the women, the envy of men, the paragon of the best company in Paris, the renowned duellist, not to produce more effect on a miserable notary! It was odious; although he was tête-à-tête with Jacques Ferrand, his self-pride revolted.

"Where are the draughts?"

With the end of one of his fingers, hard as iron, and covered with red hair, the notary, without answering, struck on a large portfolio of leather placed near him.

Decided to be equally laconic, although bursting with rage, the viscount took from the pocket of his coat a small book of Russian leather, clasped with golden hasps, drew out forty bills of one thousand francs each, and showed them to the notary.

"How much?" asked he. "Forty thousand francs!" "Give them to me." "Here, and let us finish quickly, monsieur: do your business, pay yourself, hand me back the draughts," said the viscount, throwing the packet impatiently on the table.

The notary took them, arose and examined them near the window, turning them over one by one with an attention so scrupulous and so

insulting to M. de Saint Rémy, that he grew pale with rage.

The notary, as if he had suspected the thoughts which agitated the viscount, shook his head, half turned towards him, and said in an undefinable tone, "Such things are—"

For a moment astonished, M. de Saint Rémy replied, dryly, "What?"

"Counterfeit bills," answered the notary, continuing to examine those he held closely.

"For what purpose do you make this remark to me, monsieur?"

Jacques Ferrand stopped a moment, looked steadily at the viscount through his glasses; then, shrugging his shoulders, he turned again to counting and examining the bills.

"Mort Dieu! Monsieur Notary, you must know, when I ask a question, I am always answered!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, irritated beyond measure at the calmness of Jacques Ferrand.

"Those are good," said the notary, turning towards his bureau, from whence he took a bundle of stamped papers, to which were annexed two bills of exchange; he afterward placed one of the notes for a thousand francs and three rouleaux of one hundred francs on the back of the papers; then he said to M. de Saint Rémy, pointing with his finger to the money and bills, "There is what is to come to you from the forty thousand francs; my client has ordered me to collect the bill of costs."

The viscount had with great difficulty contained himself while Jacques Ferrand arranged his accounts. Instead of answering him and taking the money, he cried, in a voice trembling with anger, "I ask you, monsieur, why you said to me, respecting the bank bills that I have just given you, *that there was such things as false bills!*"

"Why?" "Yes."

"Because I have sent for you here concerning a forgery." And the notary planted his green glasses full on the viscount. "And how does this forgery affect me?"

After a moment's pause, Mr. Ferrand said, with a sad and severe manner,

"Are you acquainted, monsieur, with the duties of a notary?" "The duties are perfectly clear to me, monsieur. I had just now forty thousand francs; I have now remaining but thirteen hundred." "You are very jocose, monsieur. I will tell you, that a notary is to temporal affairs what a confessor is to spiritual ones; from his profession he often knows ignoble secrets."

"What next, monsieur?"

"He is often obliged to be in relations with rogues."

"What after this, monsieur?"

"He ought, as much as is in his power, to prevent an honourable name from being dragged in the mire."

"What have I in common with all this?"

"Your father has left you a respected name, which you dishonour, monsieur!"

"What do you dare to say?"

"Save the interest that this name inspires to all honest people, instead of being cited here before me, you would have been at this moment before the police."

"I do not comprehend you."

"About two months since, you had discounted, through the agency of a broker, a bill for fifty eight thousand francs, drawn by the house of Meulaert and Co., of Hamburg, in favour of William Smith, and payable in three months, at M. Grimaldi, banker in Paris."

"Well!" "This bill is a forgery."

"That is not true."

"This bill is a forgery! the house of Meulaert has never contracted any engagement with William Smith; they do not know him."

"Can it be true!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, with as much surprise as indignation; "but then I have been horribly deceived, monsieur, for I received this bill as ready money." "From whom?" "From William Smith himself; the house of Meulaert is so well known, I knew so well myself the probity of William Smith, that I accepted this bill in payment of a debt he owed me."

"William Smith has never existed; it is an imaginary person." "Monsieur, you insult me!" "His signature is as false as the others." "I tell you, monsieur, that William Smith does exist; but I have, without doubt, been the dupe of a horrible breach of confidence."

"Poor young man!"

"Explain yourself!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, whose anxiety and humiliation were increased by the ironical pity of the notary. "In four words, the actual holder of the bill is convinced that you have committed the forgery." "Monsieur!" "He pretends to have the proof; two days ago he came to me to beg me to send for you here, and to propose to return you this forged draught, under an arrangement. So far, all was fair; this is not; and I only tell you for information. He asks one hundred thousand francs. To-day even, or to-morrow at noon, the forgery will be made known to the 'procureur du roi.'"

"This is an indignity!" "And what is more, an absurdity. You are ruined. You were prosecuted for a sum that you have just paid me, from some resource I do not know of: this is what I told to this third party. He answered, 'that a certain great lady, who is very rich, would not leave you in this embarrassment.' " "Enough, monsieur! enough!" "Another indignity! another absurdity! we agree." "In fine, monsieur, what do they want?" "Unworthily to take advantage of an unworthy action. I have consented to make this proposition known to you, in branding it as an honest man ought to brand it. Now it is your affair. If you are guilty, choose between the court of assize or the terms proposed. My part is altogether officious. I will have nothing more to do with so dirty a business. The third party's name is M. Petit Jean, oil-merchant; he lives on the banks of the Seine, 'quai de Billy, No. 10.' Settle with him. You are worthy of each other, if you are a forger, as he affirms."

M. de Saint Rémy had entered the notary's with an insolent voice and lofty head. Although he had committed in his life some disgraceful actions, there remained in him still a certain pride of lineage—a natural courage which had never failed him; at the commencement of this conversation, regarding the notary as an adversary quite unworthy of him, he treated him with contempt.

When Jacques Ferrand spoke of forgery, the viscount felt himself crushed. He found the notary had the advantage in his turn. Except for his great self-command, he could not have concealed the great impression made upon him by this unexpected accusation; for the consequences might be most fatal to him, of which even the notary had no idea.

After a moment's reflection and silence, he determined—he, so proud, so irritable, so vain of his bravery—to throw himself on the mercy of this vulgar man, who had so rudely spoken the austere language of probity. "Monsieur, you give me a proof of interest for which I thank you; I regret the harshness of my first words," said M. de Saint Rémy, in a cordial manner. "I do not interest myself in you at all," answered the notary, brutally. "Your father was honour itself; I did not wish to see his name in the court of assizes, that's all."

"I repeat to you, monsieur, that I am incapable of the infamy of which I am accused." "You can tell that to M. Petit Jean." "But I avow that the absence of M. Smith, who has so unworthily taken advantage of my good faith—"

"Infamous Smith!" "The absence of M. Smith places me in a cruel position; I am innocent; let them accuse me, I will prove it; but such an accusation always injures a gallant man." "What next?" "Be generous enough to use the sum I have just paid you to quiet, in part, this third person."

"This money belongs to my client—it is sacred."

"But in two or three days I will repay you."

"You cannot do it." "I have resources." "None available, at least. Your furniture, your horses no longer belong to you, as you may say; which to me has the appearance of fraud." "You are very hard, monsieur. But admitting this, will I not turn everything into money, in a situation so desperate? Only as it is impossible for me to procure between this and to-morrow one hundred thousand francs, I conjure you, employ this money to withdraw this unhappy draught. Or you, who are so rich, make me an advance; do not leave me in such a position." "I make myself responsible for a hundred thousand francs for you? Ah, now! are you, then, a fool?" "Monsieur, I supplicate you, in the name of my father, of whom you have spoken, be so kind as to—" "I am kind for those who deserve it," said the notary, rudely; "an honest man; I hate rogues; and I should not be sorry to see one of you fine gentlemen, who are without law or Gospel, impious and debauched, some nice time, standing in the pillory as an example for others. But I hear your horses are very restless, Monsieur le Viscount," said the notary, smiling, and showing his black teeth.

At this moment some one knocked at the door. "Who is it?" asked Jacques Ferrand. "Madame Comtesse d'Orbigny," said the clerk. "Beg her to wait a moment." "It is the step-mother of the Marquise d'Harville," cried M. de Saint Rémy.

"Yes, monsieur. She has an appointment with me; so good-morning." "Not a word of this, monsieur!" said M. de Saint Rémy, in a threatening tone. "I have told you, monsieur, that a notary was as discreet as a confessor."

Jacques Ferrand rang the bell, and the clerk appeared.

"Show in Madame d'Orbigny." Then, addressing the viscount, "Take these thirteen hundred francs, monsieur; it will be so much on account with M. Petit Jean."

Madame d'Orbigny (formerly Madame Roland) entered at the moment the viscount went out, his features contracted with rage for having uselessly humiliated himself before the notary.

"Ah! good-morning, Monsieur de Saint Rémy," said Madame d'Orbigny; "it is a long time since I have seen you."

"Yes, madame; since the marriage of D'Harville, of which I was a witness, I have not had the honour to meet you," said M. de Saint Rémy, bowing, and suddenly assuming a most smiling and affable expression. "Since then you have always remained in Normandy?"

"Mon Dieu! yes. M. d'Orbigny cannot live now but in the country; and where he lives, I live. Thus you see in me a true 'provinciale.' I have not been to Paris since the marriage of my dear stepdaughter with the excellent M. d'Harville. Do you see him often?"

"D'Harville has become very savage and very morose. I meet him very seldom in society," said M. de Saint Rémy, with a shade of impatience; for this conversation was insupportable, both from its inopportune-ness, and because the notary seemed to be much amused. But the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, enchanted at this "rencontre" with an "élegant," was not the woman to let her prey escape so easily. "And my dear stepdaughter," continued she, "is not, I hope, as savage as her husband?" "Madame d'Harville is very fashionable, and always much sought after, as a pretty woman should be; but I fear, madame, I trespass on your time, and—"

"Not at all, I assure you. I am quite fortunate to meet the 'élegant' of 'élégants,' the king of fashion; in ten minutes I shall know all about Paris, as if I had never left it. And your dear friend, M. de Lucenay, who was, with you, a witness of the marriage of M. d'Harville?" "More of an original than ever; he set out for the East, and he returned just in time to receive yesterday morning a thrust from a sword; of no great harm, however." "The poor duke! and his wife, always beautiful and ravishing?" "You know, madame, that I have the honour to be one of her best friends; my testimony on this subject would be suspected. Will you, madame, on your return to Aubiers, do me the honour to remember me to M. d'Orbigny?"

"He will be very sensible of your kind recollections, I assure you, for he often asks after you and your success. He says you remind him of the Duke de Lauzun." "This comparison alone is quite a eulogium; but, unfortunately for me, it is much more kind than true. Adieu, madame; for I dare not hope that you will do me the honour to receive me before your departure." "I should be 'désolée' that you should take the trouble to call upon me. I am for a few days at a 'hôtel garni;' but if, this summer or fall, you pass our way to some of the fashionable chateaus, grant us a few days only by way of contrast, and to rest yourself with some poor country-folks from the giddy round of the chateau-life, so elegant and so extravagant; for it is always 'fête' where you go."

"Madame—" "I need not tell you how happy M. d'Orbigny and myself would be to receive you; but adieu, monsieur; I fear that the benevolent humorist," pointing to the notary, "will become tired of our talk." "Just the contrary, madame, just the contrary," said Ferrand, in an accent which redoubled the restrained rage of the viscount. "Acknowledge that M. Ferrand is a terrible man," continued Madame d'Orbigny; "but take care, since he is, fortunately for you, charged with your affairs, he will scold you furiously; he is without pity. But what do I say! A man like you to have M. Ferrand for notary—it is a sign of amendment; for every one knows he never lets his client commit any follies without informing them of it. Oh! he does not wish to be the notary of every one." Then, addressing Jacques Ferrand, she said, "Do you know, Mr. Puritan, that this is a superb conversion you have made here—to render wise and prudent the 'élegant,' the king of fashion?" "It is exactly a conversion, madame; M. le Vicomte leaves my cabinet altogether different from what he entered it." "When I say you perform miracles, it is not astonishing you are a saint." "Ah, madame, you flatter me," said Jacques Ferrand.

M. de Saint Rémy profoundly saluted Madame d'Orbigny; then, at the moment of leaving the notary, wishing to try a last effort to soften him, he said in a careless manner, which nevertheless disclosed profound anxiety,

"Decidedly, my dear M. Ferrand, you will not grant me what I ask?" "Some folly, without doubt! he is inexorable, my dear Puritan," cried Madame d'Orbigny, laughing. "You hear, monsieur; I cannot act contrary to the advice of so handsome a lady." "My dear M. Ferrand, let us speak seriously of serious things, and you know that this is so. You refuse decidedly?" asked the viscount, with anguish he could not conceal. The notary was cruel enough to appear to hesitate; M. de Saint Rémy had a moment of hope. "How, man of iron, you recede?" said the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, laughing: "you submit also to the charms of the irresistible?" "Ma foi, madame, I was on the point of yielding, as you say, but you make me blush for my weakness," said M. Ferrand; then turning to the viscount with an expression of which he comprehended all the signification, he continued: "There, seriously, it is impossible; I will not suffer that, through caprice, you should not commit such an absurdity. Monsieur le Vicomte, I regard myself as the mentor of my clients; I have no other family, and I should regard myself as an accomplice of any errors I should allow them to commit." "Oh! the Puritan, the Puritan!" cried Madame d'Orbigny. "Yet, see M. Velit Jean; he will think, I am sure, as I do; and, like me, he will refuse." M. de Saint Rémy left in a state of desperation. After a moment's thought, he said, "It must be!" Then addressing his chasseur, who held open the door of the carriage, "To the Hotel de Lucenay." While M. de Saint Rémy is on his way to the duchesse, we will be present with the reader at the interview between M. Ferrand and the stepmother of Madame d'Harville.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WILL.

"THE reader has perhaps forgotten the portrait of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, drawn by the latter.

We repeat that Madame d'Orbigny was a little slender blonde, with eyebrows almost white, and pale blue eyes almost round; her speech is honeyed, her look hypocritical, her manners insinuating and insidious. "What a charming young man is the Viscount de Saint Rémy!" said she to Jacques Ferrand, when the viscount had gone.

"Charming—but, madame, let us talk of business: you wrote me from Normandy that you wished to consult me on some grave affairs." "Have you not always been my adviser, since the good Doctor Polidori referred me to you? Apropos, have you heard from him?" asked Madame d'Orbigny in a careless manner.

"Since his departure from Paris, he has not written me once," answered the notary no less indifferently. We must inform the reader that these two personages lied most boldly to each other. The notary had seen Polidori recently (one of his two accomplices), and had proposed to him to go to Asnières, to the Martials, the fresh-water pirates, of whom we shall speak presently, under the name of Dr. Vincent, to poison Louise Morel. The stepmother of Madame d'Harville came to Paris expressly to have a conference with this scoundrel, who now went by the name of César Bradamanté.

"But it is not concerning the good doctor," said Madame d'Orbigny; "you seem much troubled; my husband is sick; he grows worse daily. Without causing me serious fears, his condition troubles me, or, rather, troubles him," continued she, wiping her tearless eyes. "What is the matter?" "He continually speaks of his final arrangements—of his will." Here Madame d'Orbigny hid her face in her handkerchief for some moments. "That is sad, doubtless," said the notary; "but this precaution is not alarming: what are his intentions, madame?" "Mon Dieu! what do I know? You know well, when he touches on this subject, I change it." "But, in fine, on this subject has he said nothing positive?" "I believe," said Madame d'Orbigny, in a most disinterested manner, "I believe he wishes, not only to give me all the law allows—but—oh! hold, I beg you, let us not speak of this!" "What shall we speak of?"

"Alas! you are right, relentless man! we must return to the sad subject which brought me here. Well, M. d'Orbigny carries his kindness so far as to wish to convert a part of his fortune and give me a considerable sum." "But his daughter—his daughter!" cried M. Ferrand, with severity; "I ought to tell you that, for a year past, M. d'Harville has given me charge of his affairs. I have lately bought for him a magnificent property. You know my roughness in business: it imports little to me that M. d'Harville is my client; that which I plead is the cause of justice; if your husband takes towards his daughter, Madame d'Harville, a determination which seems to me not proper, I tell you plainly, he must not count on me. Straight forward! such has always been my line of con-

duct." "And mine also! Thus I repeat to my husband always, just as you have said: 'Your daughter has treated you badly; so be it; but that is no reason to disinherit her.'" "Very well—all right; and what did he answer?"

"He answered, 'I shall leave my daughter twenty-five thousand francs, de rentes. She had more than a million from her mother; her husband has an enormous income; can I not leave the rest to you, my tender friend, the sole support, the sole consolation of my old age, my guardian angel?' I repeat these too flattering words," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a modest sigh, "to show you his goodness towards me; yet I have always refused his offers; seeing which, he decided to beg me to come and find you." "But I do not know M. d'Orbigny." "But he, like every one else, knows your probity." "But how did he address you to me?" "To silence my scruples, he said, 'I do not propose you to consult my notary; you will think him too much under my orders; but I will leave it to the decision of a man whose honesty is proverbial, M. Ferrand. If he finds your delicacy compromised by your acceptance of my offer, we will talk no more about it; if not, you acquiesce.' I consent, said I, and in this way you have become our arbitrator. 'If he approves, added my husband, 'I will send him a full power to realize, in my name, my property in 'rentes' and 'portefeuille'; he will keep this sum on deposit, and, after my death, my kind friend, you will at least have an income worthy of you.'"

Never, perhaps, had M. Ferrand felt more the value of his spectacles than at this moment. Without them, Madame d'Orbigny would have seen how his eyes sparkled at the word deposit. He answered, however, in a cross tone: "This is troublesome; this is for the tenth or twelfth time that I have been chosen an arbiter, always under pretext of my probity; that is the only word in their mouths—my probity! my probity! great advantage—it only gives me trouble and—" "My good M. Ferrand, come, don't scold; you will, then, write to M. d'Orbigny; he awaits your letter, to send you his full power to realize the sum." "How much is it?" "He said, I believe, that it was about four or five hundred thousand francs." "The amount is not so large as I thought; after all, you have devoted yourself to M. d'Orbigny. His daughter is very rich—you have nothing—I can approve of this; it appears to me, you might accept."

"Really, you think so?" said Madame d'Orbigny, dupe, like every one else, of the proverbial honesty of the notary, and who had not been undeceived in this respect by Polidori. "You may accept," said he. "I will accept, then," said Madame d'Orbigny, with a sigh.

The clerk knocked at the door. "Who is it?" demanded M. Ferrand. "Madame la Comtesse M'Gregor." "Let her wait a moment." "I leave you, then, my dear M. Ferrand," said Madame d'Orbigny; "you will write to my husband, since he desires it, and he will send you full powers to-morrow." "I will write." "Adieu, my worthy and good counsellor."

"Ah! you do not know, you people of the world, how disagreeable it is to take charge of such deposits—the responsibility which bears on us. I tell you, there is nothing more detestable than this fine reputation for probity, which brings

you nothing but drudgery?" "And the admiration of good people!"

"Dieu merci! I place otherwise than here below the recompense I seek for," said M. Ferrand, in a sanctified tone. To Madame d'Orbigny succeeded Sarah M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE COUNTESS M'GREGOR.

SARAH entered the cabinet of the notary with her habitual coolness and assurance; Jacques Ferrand did not know her; he was ignorant of the object of her visit; he observed her very closely, in the hope to make a new dupe, and, notwithstanding the impassibility of the marble face, he remarked a slight tremour, which appeared to him to betray a concealed embarrassment.

The notary arose from his chair and handed a seat to the countess, saying, "You asked for a meeting, madame, yesterday; I was so much occupied that I could not send you an answer until this morning; I make you a thousand excuses." "I desired to see you, monsieur, for an affair of the greatest importance. Your reputation has made me hope my business with you will be successful."

The notary bowed in his chair. "I know, monsieur, that your discretion is well tried." "It is my duty, madame." "You are, monsieur, a rigid and incorruptible man." "Yes, madame." "Yet, if one should say to you, monsieur, it depends on you to restore life—more than life—reason to an unhappy mother, would you have the courage to refuse?" "State facts, madame, I will answer." "About fourteen years since, at the end of December, 1824, a man, still young, and dressed in mourning, came to propose to you to take for an annuity the sum of one hundred and fifty thousand francs for a child of three years, whose parents desired to remain unknown." "Continue, madame!" said the notary, avoiding a direct answer. "You consented to receive this amount and to assure the child an income of eight thousand francs; the one half of this amount was to be added to the capital until its majority; the other half was to be paid by you to the person who should take charge of this little girl." "Continue, madame." "At the end of two years," said Sarah, without being able to conquer a slight emotion, "the 28th November, 1827, this child died." "Before continuing this conversation, madame, I shall ask you what interest you have in this affair?" "The mother of this little girl is my sister, monsieur; I have here, for proof of what I advance, the publication of the death of this poor little thing, the letters from the person who had care of her, the obligation of one of your clients, with whom you placed the fifty thousand crowns." "Let me see these papers, madame." Quite astonished not to be believed at her word, Sarah drew from a portfolio several papers, which the notary closely examined. "Ah, well! Madame, what do you want? The notice of the death is all in rule, the fifty thousand crowns became the property of M. Petit Jean, my client, by the death of the child; as to the interests, they were

always punctually paid by me until its decease." "Nothing can be more correct than your conduct in this affair; monsieur, I am pleased to acknowledge it. The woman to whom the child was confided has also a right to our gratitude; she has taken the greatest care of my poor little niece." "That is true, madame; I was so much pleased with her conduct, that, after the death of the child, I took her in my service; she is still there." "Madame Séraphin is in your service, monsieur?" "For fourteen years, as housekeeper." "Since it is thus, monsieur, she can be of great assistance, if you will grant a demand which will appear strange, perhaps, even culpable at first; but, when you shall know with what intention—"

"A culpable demand, madame! I do not think you are any more capable of making than I am of hearing."

"I know, monsieur, that you are the last person to whom one should address such a request; but I place all my hopes—my sole hope—in your pity. In every case I rely on your discretion." "Yes, madame." "I continue, then. The death of this poor little girl has cast her mother into such a state of desolation, her grief is as lively at the present day as it was fourteen years since; and, after having feared for her life, to-day we fear for her reason."

"Poor mother!" said M. Ferrand, with a sigh. "Oh! yes, very unfortunate mother, monsieur; for she could only blush at the birth of her daughter, at the time she lost her; while now circumstances are such, that my sister, if her child still lived, could own her, be proud of her, never leave her. Thus, this incessant regret, joined to other griefs, makes us fear for her reason." "Unfortunately, nothing can be done for her." "Yes, monsieur." "How, madame?" "Suppose some one should come and say to the poor mother, 'Your child was supposed to be dead; she is not; the woman who had care of her infancy can affirm it.'"

"Such a falsehood would be cruel, madame. Why cause vain hopes to this poor mother?"

"But if it was not a falsehood, monsieur; or, rather, if this supposition could be realized?"

"By a miracle! If it only needed to obtain it, my prayers joined to yours, I would pray from the bottom of my heart. Alas! there can be no doubt of her death!"

"Mon Dieu! I know it, monsieur, the child is dead; and yet, if you wish it, the evil is not irreparable." "It is an enigma, madame." "I will speak, then, more plainly. Let my sister find to-morrow her child, not only will she be restored to health, but, what is more, she is sure to marry the father of this child, now as free as she is. My niece died at six years. Separated from her parents at this tender age, they have no recollection of her. Suppose that a young girl of seventeen could be found; that my sister should be told, 'Here is your child; you have been deceived; certain interests required that she should be thought dead. The woman who had charge of her, a respectable notary will affirm, will prove to you that it is she.'"

Jacques Ferrand, after having allowed the countess to speak without interrupting her, rose suddenly, and cried, in an indignant manner, "Enough, enough, madame! Oh, this is infa-

mons!" "Monsieur!" "To dare to propose to me—to me—to palm off a child—a criminal action! It is the first time in my life that I have received such an outrage, and I have not deserved it—mon Dieu! you know it!" "But, monsieur, who is wronged by it? My sister and the person she desires to marry are single; both regret bitterly the child they have lost; to deceive them! it is to restore to them happiness—life; it is to assure to some forsaken young girl a most happy lot: thus it is a noble, generous action, and not a crime!" "Truly!" cried the notary, with increasing indignation, "I see how the most execrable projects can be coloured with—" "But, monsieur, reflect." "I repeat to you, madame, that it is infamous. It is a shame to see a woman of your rank contriving such abominations, to which your sister, I hope, is a stranger." "Monsieur!" "Enough, madame, enough! I am not gallant, not I. I tell you the naked truth." Sarah cast on the notary one of her dark looks, and said, coldly, "You refuse?" "No new insult, madame!" "Take care!" "Threats!" "Threats! and to prove to you that they will not be in vain, learn, in the first place, that I have no sister." "How, madame!" "I am the mother of this child." "You?"

"I invented this fable to interest you. You are without pity; I raise the mask. You want war! well, war!" "War! because I refuse to lend myself to a criminal act! what audacity!" "Listen to me, monsieur; your reputation as an honest man is great—known far and near." "Because it is merited. Thus, you must have lost your reason before you would have dared to make such a proposition!"

"Better than any one, I know, monsieur, how much one ought to suspect these reputations of such strict virtue, which often conceal the gallantries of women and the scoundrelism of men." "You dare to say this, madame?" "Since the commencement of our conversation, I do not know wherefore, I doubt that you deserve the consideration and esteem which you enjoy." "Truly, madame, this doubt does honour to your perspicacity." "Is it not so! for this doubt is founded on nothing—on instinct—on inexplicable presentiments; but rarely has this boding deceived me."

"Let us finish this conversation, madame."

"Before we do so, know my determination. I begin by telling you, from me to you, that I am convinced of the death of my poor child; but, no matter, I will pretend she is not dead; the most unlikely actions are often brought. You are at this moment in such a position that you must have many envious rivals; they will regard it as a piece of good fortune to attack you. I will furnish them." "You!" "I, in attacking you under an absurd pretext, on an irregularity in the 'acte de décès,' I suppose—no matter, I will maintain my child is not dead. As I have the greatest interest in having it believed that she still lives, although lost, this process will serve me in giving much notoriety to this affair; a mother who reclaims her child is always interesting; I shall have on my side those who are envious of you, your enemies, and all those who are feeling and romantic." "This is as foolish as wicked! Why should I! for what interest should I say your child is

dead, if she were not!" "That is true, the motive is sufficiently embarrassing to find. Happiness, the lawyers are there! But a thought! ah! an excellent one; wishing to divide with your client the sum paid for the annuity, you have caused the child to be carried off."

The notary, without moving a muscle of his face, shrugged his shoulders. "If I had been criminal enough to do that, instead of sending her off, I would have killed her!" Sarah shuddered with surprise, remained silent for a moment, then resumed with bitterness: "For a holy man, that is a thought of crime profoundly deep!" "Have I then touched to the quick in shooting at random?" "This makes me think, and I will think—one last word: you see what kind of a woman I am—I crush without pity all those who cross my path. Reflect well; to-morrow you must decide; you can do with impunity what you are asked. In his joy, the father of my child would not discuss the probability of such a resurrection, if our falsehoods, which will render him so happy, are adroitly combined. He has, besides, no other proofs of the death of our child, than what I wrote him fourteen years since; it will be easy for me to persuade him that I deceive him on this subject; for then I had just cause of complaint against him. I will tell him that in my anger I wished to break, in his eyes, the last link which still held us together. You cannot then in any way be compromised: affirm only, irreproachable man, affirm that all has been concerted between you and me and Madame Seraphin, and you will be believed. As to the money placed with you, that concerns me alone; it shall remain with your client, who must be ignorant of all this; finally, you shall fix yourself your own recompense."

Jacques Ferrand preserved all his "sang froid," notwithstanding his position, so strange and dangerous for him. The countess, believing really in the death of her child, came to propose to him to represent as living this child, whom he had himself passed for dead fourteen years before. He was too cunning, he knew too well the perils of his situation, not to comprehend the bearing of Sarah's threats. Although admirably constructed, the edifice of the notary's reputation was built on sand. The public as easily detach as they attach themselves, and are pleased with the right to trample under foot those whom they once had exalted to the skies. How foresee the consequences of the first attack on the reputation of Jacques Ferrand? However ridiculous this attack might be, its boldness alone might awaken suspicion.

The pertinacity of Sarah, her obduracy, alarmed the notary. This mother had not shown for a moment any feeling in speaking of her child; she had only seemed to consider her death as the loss of a means of action. Such dispositions are implacable in their objects, and in their vengeance. Wishing to give himself time to seek some means to avoid the dangerous blow, Ferrand said coldly to Sarah, "You have asked until noon to-morrow. It is I, madame, who give you until the next day to renounce a project, of which you know not the gravity. If, from this time to that, I have not received a letter from you, in which you announce that you have abandoned this foolish

and criminal undertaking, you will learn to your cost that justice knows how to protect honest people who refuse to lend themselves to culpable acts."

"That is to say, monsieur, that you demand one day more to reflect on my propositions! That is a good sign; I grant it you. After to-morrow, at this hour, I will return here, and it shall be between us peace or war; I repeat it to you, a war to the knife, without mercy or pity," and Sarah disappeared. "All goes well," said she to herself. "This miserable young girl, for whom Rodolphe was so much interested—thanks to the Borgnesse, who has delivered me from her, she is no longer to be feared."

"The address of Rodolphe has saved Madame d'Harville from the snare I placed for her; but it is impossible she can escape from the new plot I have contrived; she will then be forever lost to him. Then, sad, discouraged, isolated from all ties, will he not be in such a disposition of mind, that he will not desire anything better than to be the dupe of a falsehood, to which, with the aid of the notary, I can give every appearance of truth! And the notary will assist me, for I have alarmed him. I can easily find a young orphan girl, interesting and poor, who, instructed by me, will fill the part of our child, so bitterly regretted by Rodolphe. I know the grandeur, the generosity of his heart. Yes, to give a name, a rank to her whom he believes to be his daughter, until then unhappy and abandoned, he will renew those ties which I had thought indissoluble. The predictions of my nurse will at length be realized, and I shall have this time surely attained the constant aim of my life—a crown!" Hardly had Sarah left the mansion of the notary, than M. Charles Robert entered it, descending from an elegant cabriolet; he turned towards the private cabinet, as one having the entrée.

CHAPTER XXV.

M. CHARLES ROBERT.

THE commandant, as Madame Pipelet called him, entered without any ceremony the notary's office, whom he found in a very thoughtful and splenetic mood, and who said to him very roughly, "I reserve the afternoon for my clients; when you wish to speak to me, come in the morning." "My dear scrivener (this was one of the pleasantries of M. Robert), it is concerning an important affair, in the first place, and then I wish to assure you myself concerning the fears that you might have." "What fears?" "Do you not know, then?" "What?" "My duel." "Your duel?" "With the Duke de Lucenay. How, are you ignorant of it?" "Yes." "Ah, bah!" "And why this duel?" "Something very serious, which required blood. Just imagine that, in the face of the whole embassy, M. de Lucenay allowed himself to say to me, to my face, that I had the pituite!" "What did you have?" "The pituite, my dear scrivener; a complaint that must be very ridiculous!" "You fought for this?" "And what the devil would you have one to fight for? Do you think, then, that one could, in cold blood, hear one's self accused of having the pituite? and before a charming woman, too; what is more, before a

little marquise, who, in fine—enough: it could not be overlooked." "Certainly."

"We soldiers, you understand, we are always on the look-out. My seconds, the day before yesterday, had an interview with those of the duke. I had the question placed very plainly: a duel or a retraction." "A retraction of what?" "Of the pituite, pardieu! which he allowed himself to attribute to me." The notary shrugged his shoulders. "On their side, the seconds of the duke said, 'We render justice to the honourable character of M. Charles Robert; but M. de Lucenay cannot, ought not, wishes not to retract.' 'Then, gentlemen,' responded my seconds, 'M. de Lucenay still continues to insist that M. Charles Robert has the pituite?' 'Yes, gentlemen; but he does not intend it as an attack upon the consideration of M. Robert.' 'Then let him retract.' 'No, gentlemen; M. de Lucenay recognises M. Robert for a gallant man, but he insists that he has the pituite.' You see there was no way of arranging so serious an affair." "None. You were insulted in that which a man holds to be most respectable." "Is it not so! Thus they agreed on the day and hour of meeting, and yesterday morning, at Vincennes, all passed in the most honourable manner. I touched the duke slightly in the arm with my sword; the seconds declared my honour satisfied. Then the duke said, in a loud voice, 'I never retract before an affair; afterwards, it is different: it is, then, my duty to proclaim that I falsely accused M. Charles Robert of having the pituite. Gentlemen, I confess, not only that my loyal adversary has not the pituite, but I affirm that he is incapable of ever having it.' Then the duke extended his hand to me cordially, saying, 'Are you content! Henceforth we are friends in life until death!' I answered, that I owed him as much. The duke has done everything that was right. He might have said nothing at all, or contented himself with saying that I had not the pituite; but to affirm that I never could have it, it was a very delicate proceeding on his part."

"This is what I call courage well employed. But what do you want?" "My dear *guard-notes* (another pleasantry of M. Robert), it concerns something of great importance to me. You know that, in our agreement, when I advanced you 350,000 francs, in order that you might finish the purchase of your notariat, it was stipulated that, by giving you three months' notice, I could withdraw from you this amount, for which you now pay interest."

"What next?" "Well!" said M. Robert, with hesitation, "I—no—but—it is that—" "What?" "You perceive, it is pure caprice; an idea to become a landed proprietor, dear scrivener."

"Explain yourself, then; you annoy me!" "In a word, I have been offered a territorial acquisition, and if it is not disagreeable to you, I should wish, that is to say, I should desire to withdraw my funds from you; and I come to give you notice, according to our agreement." "Ah! ah!" "It does not make you angry, I hope?" "Why should it?" "Because you may think—" "I may think?" "That I am the echo of rumours." "What rumours?" "No, nothing; absurdities." "But tell me, then?" "It is no reason because there are reports in cir-

caution about you—" "About me!" "There is not a word of truth in it—that you have been doing some bad business; pure scandal, no doubt. It is like when we speculated on the 'Change together. This report soon fell to the ground; for I wish that you and I might become—" "Then you think your money is no longer safe with me?" "Yes, yes; but I prefer to have it in my hands." "Wait for me, then."

M. Ferrand shut the drawer of his bureau, and arose. "Where are you going to, my dear 'guardnotes!'" "To look for something to convince you of the truth of the rumours concerning me," said the notary, ironically. And opening a little private staircase which led to the pavilion, without going through the office, he disappeared.

Hardly had he gone when the clerk knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Charles Robert. "Is not M. Ferrand here?"

"No, my worthy 'basochien.'*" (Another pleasantry.)

"It is a lady, veiled, who wishes to speak to the patron instantly, for a very pressing business." "Worthy basochien, the patron will return directly; I will tell him this. Is she pretty?"

"One must be a wizard to find this out; she wears a black veil, so thick that her face cannot be seen." "Good, good! I'll take a look at her when I go out." The clerk left the room.

"Where the devil is he gone to?" said M. Charles to himself. "If these reports are absurd, so much the better! Never mind, I prefer to have my money. I will buy the chateau they have spoken to me of. There are Gothic towers of the time of Louis XIV.; this will give me the appearance of a seigneur. It will not be like my affair with this pride of a Madame d'Harville—fine game! Oh, no! I have not made my expenses, as the old stupid 'portière' of the Rue du Temple said, with her fantastic periwig. This pleasantry has cost me at least a thousand crowns. It is true, the furniture remains; and I can compromise the marquise. But here is the scrivener."

M. Ferrand returned, holding in his hand some papers, which he gave to M. Robert. "Here," said he to him, "are three hundred and fifty thousand francs in Treasury notes. In a few days we will regulate the interest. Write me a receipt."

"How!" cried M. Charles, stupefied. "Ah! now don't think, at least, that I—" "I think nothing." "But—" "This receipt!" "Dear 'guard-notes!'" "Write then; and tell the people who speak to you of my embarrassments, how I answer these suspicions." "The fact is, as soon as this is known, your credit will only be the more solid. But, really, take the money; I cannot use it now; I said in three months."

"M. Charles Robert, no one shall suspect me twice."

"You are angry?" "The receipt!" "Barre de fer!" said M. Charles Robert; then he added, in writing the receipt, "There is a lady closely veiled, who wishes to speak to you on some very pressing business. I shall take a good look at her when I pass. Here is your

receipt; is it right?" "Very well! now go away by the little staircase." "But the lady!" "It is just to prevent your seeing her." And the notary rung for the clerk, saying to him, "Show the lady in. Adieu, Monsieur Robert."

"Well! I must renounce seeing her. No bad feeling, eh! scrivener?" "Believe that." "Well, well! adieu." And the notary shut the door on M. Charles Robert.

After a few moments the clerk introduced Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay, very modestly dressed, wrapped in a large shawl, and the face completely concealed by a thick veil of black lace, which covered her moire hat of the same colour.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MADAME DE LUCENAY.

MADAME DE LUCENAY approached slowly towards the desk of the notary in an agitated manner: he advanced to meet her.

"Who are you, madame, and what do you want with me?" said the notary, roughly, whose temper, already fretted by the threat of Sarah, was exasperated at the suspicions of M. Charles Robert. Besides, the duchess was so modestly dressed, that the notary saw no reason why he should be civil to her. As she hesitated to speak, he said, harshly, "Will you explain yourself, madame?" "Monsieur," said she, in a trembling voice, trying to conceal her face under the folds of her veil. "Monsieur, can one confide a secret to you of the highest importance?"

"Anything can be confided to me, madame; but I must see and know to whom I speak." "Monsieur, that, perhaps, is not necessary. I know that you are honour and loyalty itself." "Just so, madame, just so; there is some one there—some one waiting. Who are you?" "My name is of no importance, monsieur. One of my friends—of my relations—has just left you." "His name?" "M. Floreston de Saint Rémy." "Ah!" said the notary; and he cast on the duchess an inquisitive and searching glance; then resumed: "Well, madame!" "M. de Saint Rémy has told me everything, monsieur." "What did he tell you?" "All!" "But what did he say?" "Mon Dieu! monsieur, you know it well." "I know many things about M. de Saint Rémy." "Alas! monsieur, a terrible thing!" "I know a great many terrible things about M. de Saint Rémy." "Ah! monsieur, he told me truly. You are without pity." "For cheats and forgers like him, yes, I am without pity. This Saint Rémy, is he your relation? Instead of confessing it, you ought to blush. Do you come here to weep, to soften me? It is useless; without saying that you are performing a wretched part for an honest woman, if you are one." This brutal insolence was revolting to the pride and patrician blood of the duchess. She drew herself up, threw her veil back, and with a proud look, and a firm, imperious voice, she said, "I am the Duchess of Lucenay, monsieur."

This woman assumed then so great an air, her appearance became so imposing, that the notary, overcome, charmed, fell back astonished, took off mechanically his black silk cap, and saluted her profoundly.

* Basochien. The fraternity of the law in Paris.

Nothing could be, in effect, more graceful, more majestic, than the face and "tournure" of Madame de Lucenay; yet she was then over thirty years of age, with a pale face, and appeared slightly fatigued; but then she had large sparkling brown eyes, splendid black hair, a fine arched nose, a proud and ruby lip, dazzling complexion, very white teeth, tall and slender figure, a form like a *goddess on the clouds*, as the immortal Saint Simon says.

She had entered the notary's as a timid woman; all at once she showed herself a grand, proud, and irritated lady. Never had Jacques Ferrand in his life met with a woman of so much insolent beauty, of a beauty at once so bold and so noble. Although old, ugly, mean, and sordid, Jacques Ferrand was as capable as any one else of appreciating the style of beauty of Madame de Lucenay. His hatred and his rage against M. de Saint Rémy augmented with his admiration of the charming duchess; he thought to himself that this gentleman forger, who had almost kneeled before him, inspired such love in this grand lady, that she risked a step which might ruin her. At these thoughts the notary felt his audacity, which for a moment was paralyzed, restored. Hatred, envy, a kind of burning, savage resentment kindled in his looks, on his forehead, on his cheeks—the most shameful, the most wicked passions. Seeing Madame de Lucenay on the point of commencing a conversation so delicate, he expected on her part some turnings, expedients. What was his surprise! She spoke to him with as much assurance and pride as if it was concerning the most natural thing in the world, and as if before a man of his species she had no thought of the reserve and fitness which she had certainly shown to her equals. In effect, the gross insolence of the notary, in wounding her to the quick, had forced Madame de Lucenay to quit the humble and imploring part that she had at first assumed with much trouble; returned to her own dignity, she believed it to be beneath her to descend to the least concealment with this scribbler of deeds.

"Monsieur Notary," said the duchess, resolutely, to Jacques Ferrand, "M. de Saint Rémy is one of my friends; he has confided to me the embarrassing situation in which he finds himself, from the inconvenience of a double piece of villany, of which he is the victim. Everything can be managed with money: how much is necessary to terminate these miserable, shuffling tricks!"

Jacques Ferrand was completely astounded with this cavalier and deliberate manner of opening the business.

"They ask a hundred thousand francs," answered he, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment. "You shall have your hundred thousand francs; and you will send at once the bad papers to M. de Saint Rémy." "Where are the hundred thousand francs, Madame la Duchesse?" "Did I not tell you that you should have them, monsieur?" "They must be had to-morrow, before noon, madame; otherwise a complaint of forgery will be made." "Well! give this amount; I will be accountable for it; as to you, I will pay you well." "But, madame, it is impossible." "You will not tell

me, I hope, that a notary like you cannot procure a hundred thousand francs from one day to the next."

"And on what security, madame?" "What does that mean? explain yourself." "Who will be answerable for this amount?" "I." "But, madame—" "Is it necessary for me to tell you that I have a property yielding eighty thousand livres rent, at four leagues from Paris? That will suffice, I believe, for that which you call guarantee?" "Yes, madame, by means of a mortgage." "What does that mean again? Some formality doubtless. Make it, monsieur, make it." "Such a deed cannot be drawn up under two weeks, and it needs the consent of your husband, madame." "But this is my property, mine, mine alone," said the duchess, impatiently. "No matter, madame; you are in the power of your husband, and a deed of mortgage is very long and very minute." "But once more, monsieur, you cannot make me believe that it is so difficult to procure 100,000 francs in two hours."

"Then, madame, apply to your own notary, to your intendant; as to me, it is impossible." "I have reasons, monsieur, to keep this a secret," said Madame de Lucenay, heartily. "You know the rogues who wish to rob M. de Saint Rémy; it is on this account I address myself to you." "Your confidence infinitely honours me, madame; but I cannot do what you ask." "You have not this amount?" "I have much more than this sum in bank bills, or in gold—here—in my 'caisse.'" "Oh! how many words! is it my signature you wish? I give it you; let us finish." "In admitting, madame, that you are the Duchess of Lucenay." "Come in an hour's time to the Hôtel de Lucenay, monsieur; I will sign at home what is necessary to be signed." "M. le Duc, will he sign also?" "I do not comprehend, monsieur." "Your signature alone is of no value to me, madame." Jacques Ferrand enjoyed with cruel delight the impatience of the duchess, who, under this appearance of sang froid and disdain, concealed the most painful anguish. She was for a moment at the end of her resources. The evening previous, her jeweller had advanced her a considerable sum on her diamonds, some of which were confided to Morel, the artisan. This sum had served to pay the bills of M. de Saint Rémy, to disarm other creditors; M. Dubreuil, the farmer at Arnouville, was more than a year in advance, and, besides, time was wanting; unfortunately for Madame de Lucenay, two of her friends, to whom she could have had recourse in an extreme situation, were then absent from Paris. In her eyes, the viscount was innocent; he had told her, and she believed it, that he was the dupe of two rogues; but her situation was none the less terrible. He accused, he dragged to prison! Then, even if he should take to flight, would his name be any less dishonoured by such a suspicion?

"Since you possess the sum I ask for, monsieur, and that, after all, my guarantee is sufficient, why do you refuse me?"

"Because men have their caprices as well as women, madame." "But what is this caprice, which makes you act thus against your interest? for, I repeat to you, make your conditions; whatever they may be, I accept them!"

"You will accept all the conditions, madame!" said the notary, with a singular expression. "All! two, three, four thousand francs—more, if you will! for, look, I tell you," added the duchess, frankly, in a tone almost affectionate, "I have no resource but in you, monsieur, in you alone. It will be impossible for me to find elsewhere that which I ask you for to-morrow; and it must be—you understand—it must be absolutely: thus, I repeat to you, whatever condition you impose on me for this service, I accept: nothing shall cost—nothing."

In his blindness, he had interpreted in an unworthy manner the last words of the duchess. * * * It was a thought as stupid as it was infamous; but we have already said that sometimes Jacques Ferrand became a tiger or a wolf; then the beast overpowered the man. He arose quickly and advanced towards the duchess; she, thunderstruck, rose at the same moment, and regarded him with astonishment. "You will not regard the cost?" cried he in a broken voice, approaching still nearer to the duchess. "Well! this sum I will lend to you on one condition, one single condition—and I swear that—" He could not finish his declaration.

By one of those strange contradictions of human nature, at the sight of the hideous face of M. Ferrand, at the mere thought of what his conditions might be, Madame de Lucenay, notwithstanding her inquietudes, her troubles, burst out in a laugh so frank, so loud, so merry, that the notary recoiled confounded.

Then, without giving him time to utter a word, the duchess, abandoning herself more and more to her hilarity, pulled down her veil, and, between two renewed bursts of laughter, said to the notary, who was almost blind with rage, hatred, and fury, "I prefer, upon the whole, to ask this favour frankly of M. de Lucenay." She then went out, continuing to laugh so loudly that, though the door of the cabinet was closed, the notary could still hear her.

Jacques Ferrand returned to his senses only to curse his imprudence bitterly. Yes, by degrees he reassured himself in thinking that the duchess could not speak of this interview without gravely compromising herself.

Nevertheless, it was a bad day for him. He was buried in the blackest thoughts, when the private door of his cabinet was opened, and Madame Seraphin entered wildly:

"Ah! Ferrand!" cried she, clasping her hands, "you were right enough in saying that we should some day, perhaps, regret having spared her life!" "Whose?" "This cursed little girl's." "How?" "A one-eyed woman, whom I did not know, and to whom Tournemine had delivered the little girl to rid us of her, fourteen years ago, when we said she was dead—ah! mon Dieu! who would have thought it!" "Speak, then! speak, then!" "This woman has just been here; she was below just now. She told me she knew it was I who gave up the child." "Malediction! who could have told her? Tournemine is at the galleys."

"I denied everything, treating her as a liar. But, bah! she maintains that she has found this child again, who is now grown up; that she knows where she is, and that it only depends upon herself to discover everything."

"But is hell unchained against me to-day?" cried the notary, in a fit of rage that rendered him hideous."

"Mon Dieu! what shall be said to the woman! what must we promise her to keep her silent?" "Does she look as if she were poor?" "As I treated her like a beggar, she shook her 'cabas'—there was money in it." "And she knows where this young girl is now?" "She declares she knows."

"And she is the daughter of the Countess M'Gregor?" said the notary to himself; "and just now she offered me so much to say that her child was not dead! And the child lives. I can restore her to her! Yes; but this false 'acte de décès!' if any inquiry is made, I am lost! This crime may put them on the scent of others." After a moment's thought, he said to Madame Seraphin, "This one-eyed woman knows where this young girl is?" "Yes." "And this woman will return to-morrow?" "To-morrow." "Write to Polidori to be here to-night at nine o'clock."

"Is it that you mean to get rid of the young girl and the old woman! It will be too much for one time, Ferrand!"

"I tell you to write to Polidori to be here to-night by nine o'clock!"

At the close of this day, Rodolphe said to Murphy, who had not been able to see the notary,

"Let M. de Graün send a courier off at once. Cecily must be in Paris in six days."

"Once more this infernal she-devil! the execrable wife of poor David, as handsome as she is infamous!—for what good, monseigneur!"

"For what good, Sir Walter Murphy? In a month's time you shall ask this question of the notary, Jacques Ferrand."

PART V. CHAPTER I.

DENUNCIATION.

TOWARDS ten o'clock in the evening of the day on which Fleur de Marie had been carried off by La Chouette and the Maitre d'Ecole, a man on horseback arrived at the farm, coming, as he said, on the part of M. Rodolphe, to reassure Madame Georges as to the disappearance of her young protégée, who would return to her in a few days. For several very important reasons, added this man, M. Rodolphe begged Madame Georges, in the event of her having anything to send him, not to write him at Paris, but to hand the letter to the courier, who would take charge of it.

This courier was an emissary of Sarah's.

By this "ruse," she tranquillized Madame Georges, and retarded thus for some days the moment when Rodolphe must hear of the abduction of the Goualeuse. In this interval, Sarah hoped to force the notary to favour the unworthy scheme of which we have spoken. This was not all. Sarah wished also to get rid of Madame d'Harville, who inspired her with serious fears, and who would have been lost, save the presence of mind of Rodolphe.

The day after the marquis had followed his

wife to the house in the Rue du Temple, Tom went there, easily set Madame Pipelet jabbering, and learned that a young lady, on the point of being surprised by her husband, had been saved, thanks to the address of a lodger in the house named Rodolphe. Informed of this circumstance, Sarah, possessing no material proof of the "rendezvous" that Clémence had given to M. Charles Robert, conceived another odious plan. It was concocted to send another anonymous letter to the marquis, in order to effect a complete rupture between him and Rodolphe, or, at least, to make the marquis so suspicious as to forbid any farther intercourse between the prince and his wife.

This letter was thus couched: "You have been deceived most shamefully. The other day, your wife, advised that you were following her, pretended an imaginary visit of charity; she went to a rendezvous at a very *august* personage's who has hired, in the Rue du Temple, a room in the fourth story, under the name of Rodolphe. If you doubt these facts, strange as they may appear, go to the Rue du Temple, No. 17, and inform yourself: paint to yourself the features of the *august* person spoken of, and you will easily acknowledge that you are the most credulous, good-natured husband who has ever been so *sovereignly* deceived. Do not neglect this advice; otherwise it will be supposed that you also are too much

"*The Friend of the Prince.*"

This note was put in the post at five o'clock by Sarah, on the day of her interview with the notary. The same evening, Rodolphe went to pay a visit to Madame l'ambassadrice de ***; after which it was his intention to go to Madame d'Harville's to announce to her that he had found a *charitable intrigue* worthy of her. We will conduct the reader to Madame d'Harville's. It will be seen, from the following conversation, that this young woman, in showing herself generous and compassionate towards her husband, whom she had until then treated with extreme coldness, followed already the noble counsels of Rodolphe.

The marquis and his wife had just left the table; the scene passed in the little saloon of which we have spoken; the expression of Clémence was affectionate and kind; M. d'Harville seemed less sad than usual. He had not yet received the new and infamous letter from Sarah. "What are you going to do to-night?" said he mechanically to his wife. "I shall not go out; and yourself, what are your plans?" "I do not know," answered he with a sigh; "society is insupportable to me. I will pass this evening, like so many other evenings, alone." "Why alone, since I am not going out?" M. d'Harville looked at his wife with surprise. "Doubtless, but—" "Well?" "I know that you often prefer solitude, when you do not go out."

"Yes; but as I am very capricious," said Clémence, smiling, "at present I prefer to partake my solitude with you, if it is agreeable to you." "Really," cried M. d'Harville, with emotion, "how kind you are to anticipate what I dared not express!" "Do you know, my friend, that your astonishment has almost an air of reproach?" "A reproach! oh, no, no! not after my unjust and cruel suspicions the

other day; to find you so forgiving, it is, I confess, a surprise for me; but a surprise the most delightful."

"Let us forget the past," said she to her husband, with an angelic smile. "Clémence, can you forget?" answered he, sadly. "Have I not dared to suspect you? to tell you to what extremity a blind jealousy has impelled me! But what is all this compared to other wrongs, still greater, more irreparable?"

"Let us forget the past, I say," repeated Clémence, restraining her emotion.

"What do I hear! the past also—can you forget it?"

"I hope to do so." "Can it be true, Clémence! you can be so generous! but no, no, I cannot believe in so much happiness; I had renounced it forever." "You were wrong, you see."

"What a change! Mon Dieu! Is it a dream! Oh tell me I am not mistaken." "No, no, you are not mistaken."

"And, truly, your look is less cold; your voice almost falters. Oh, say, is it, then, true! Am I not under an illusion?"

"No, for I also have need of pardon." "You?"

"Have I not been cruel towards you? Ought I not to have thought that you must have needed a rare courage, a virtue more than human, to act differently from what you did! Isolated, unhappy, how resist the desire of seeking some consolations in a marriage which pleased you? Alas! when one suffers, one is so disposed to believe on the generosity of others! your error has been, until now, to count on mine. Well! henceforth I will try to give you reason."

"Oh! speak, speak once more," said M. d'Harville, his hands clasped in a kind of ecstasy. "Our existence is forever united. I will do all in my power to render your life less bitter." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Is it you I hear?" "I beg you, do not be so much astonished; it gives me pain; it is a bitter censure on my past conduct. Who, then, should pity you? Who, then, should lend you a friendly and helping hand, if it is not I? A happy inspiration I have received. I have reflected, well reflected, on the past, on the future. I have seen my errors, and I have found, I believe, the means to repair them."

"Your errors, poor wife?" "Yes; I should have, the next day after our marriage, appealed to your honour, and frankly demanded a separation." "Ah! Clémence! pity! pity!" "Otherwise, since I accepted my position, I should have augmented it by submission, instead of causing you constant self-reproach by my haughty and taciturn coldness. I should have endeavoured to console you for a fearful malady, by only remembering your misfortune. By degrees I should have become attached to my work of commiseration, by reason even of the cares, perhaps the sacrifices which they would have cost me: your gratitude had rewarded me, and then—but, mon Dieu! what is the matter! you weep!" "Yes, I weep, weep with joy. You do not know how many new emotions your words cause me. Oh! Clémence! let me weep!" "Never more than at this moment have I comprehended how culpable I have been in chaining you to my sad destiny!"

"And never have I felt more decided to forget. These gentle tears that you shed make me acquainted with a happiness of which I was ignorant. Courage then, my friend! courage! in default of a fortunate and smiling destiny, let us seek our satisfaction in the accomplishment of the serious duties that fate imposes. Let us be indulgent one to the other; if we falter, let us regard the cradle of our child, let us concentrate on her all our affections, and we shall yet have some joys, melancholy and holy."

"An angel, she is an angel!" cried M. d'Harville, joining his hands and looking at his wife with affectionate admiration. "Oh! you do not know the pain and pleasure you cause me, Clémence! you do not know that your harshest words formerly, your most severe reproaches, alas! the most merited, have never so much overwhelmed me as this adorable mansuetude, this generous resignation, and yet, in spite of myself, you make hope spring up again. You do not know the future that I dare imagine." "And you can blind and entice faith in what I tell you, Albert. This resolution is taken firmly; it shall never fail, I swear it to you. Before long I may give you new guarantees of my word." "Guarantees!" cried M. d'Harville, more and more excited by happiness so unlooked for, "guarantees! have I need of them? Your look, your voice, this beaming expression of goodness which still graces you, the throbbings of my heart, all, all prove to me, that what you say is true! But you know, Clémence, man is insatiable in his hopes," added the marquis. "Your noble and touching words give me courage to hope, yes, to hope that at yesterday I regarded as an insane dream!"

"Albert, I swear to you I shall always be the most devoted of friends, the most tender of sisters; but nothing more. Pardon, pardon, if, unknowingly, my words have ever given you hopes which can never be realized!" "Never!" cried M. d'Harville, fixing on her a desperate and supplicating look. "Never!" answered Clémence. This single word, the tone of voice, revealed an irrevocable resolution. Clémence, brought back to noble resolutions by the influence of Rodolphe, was firmly resolved to surround her husband with the most touching attentions; but she felt that she was incapable of ever loving him. An impression still stronger than fright, than contempt, than hatred, separated Clémence from her husband forever. It was a repugnance, invincible. After a moment of mournful silence, M. d'Harville passed his hand over his eyes, and said to his wife, bitterly,

"Pardon me for deceiving myself; pardon me for having abandoned myself to a hope mad as it was foolish. Ah! I am very unfortunate!" "My friend," said Clémence to him, gently, "I do not wish to reproach you; yet do you reckon as nothing my promise to be for you the most tender of sisters! You will owe to the most devoted friendship attentions that love could not give you. Hope for better days. Until now you have found me almost indifferent to your sorrows; you shall see how I shall compassionate you, and what consolations you will find in my affection." A valet-de-chambre entered,

and said to Clémence, "His royal highness, Monseigneur the Grand-duke of Gerolstein, asks if Madame la Marquise will receive him?" Clémence looked at her husband, who, recovering his "sang froid," said to her, "Why, doubtless." The valet-de-chambre retired. "Pardon me, my friend," said Clémence; "I did not say that I would not receive. Besides, it is a long time since you have seen the prince; he will be happy to find you here. I shall, also, be much pleased to see him; yet I avow, that just now I am so agitated that I should have preferred to receive his visit some other day." "I can comprehend it; but what could we do? Here he is." At the same moment Rodolphe was announced.

"I am a thousand times happy, madame, to have the honour to meet you," said Rodolphe; "and I doubly appreciate my good fortune, since it also procures me the pleasure of seeing you, my dear Albert," added he, turning towards the marquis, whom he cordially shook by the hand. "It is a long time, monseigneur, since I have had the honour to pay you my respects." "And whose fault is it, Monsieur Invisible! The last time I came to pay my respects to Madame d'Harville, I asked for you; you were absent. It is now three weeks that you have forgotten me; it is very wrong." "Be merciless, monseigneur," said Clémence, smiling; "M. d'Harville is so much the more culpable since he has for your highness the most profound respect, and he might make this to be doubted by his negligence." "Well! see my vanity, madame; whatever D'Harville might do, it would always be impossible for me to doubt his affection; but I ought not to say this. I am encouraging him in such conduct." "Believe me, monseigneur, that some unforeseen circumstances alone have prevented me from profiting oftener by your kindness towards me." "Between ourselves, my dear Albert, I believe you a little too platonic in friendship; very sure that you are loved, you are not pliant enough to give or receive proofs of attachment." Through a breach of etiquette, which rather annoyed Madame d'Harville, a valet-de-chambre entered, bringing a letter to the marquis. It was the anonymous denunciation of Sarah, which accused the prince of being the lover of Madame d'Harville.

The marquis, out of deference to the prince, pushed back with his hand the little silver plateau which the servant handed him, and said, in an under tone, "Not now, not now." "My dear Albert," said the prince, in the most affectionate tone, "do you stand on ceremony with me?" "Monseigneur—"

"With the permission of Madame d'Harville, I beg you to read this letter."

"I assure you, monseigneur, that there is nothing pressing." "Once more, Albert, read this letter!" "But, monseigneur—" "I entreat you—I wish it." "Since your royal highness requires it," said the marquis, taking the letter from the plateau.

"Certainly. I require that you treat me as a friend."

Then turning towards the marquise, while M. d'Harville broke the seal of this fatal letter, the contents of which Rodolphe could not have imagined, he added, smiling, "What a triumph

for you, madame, to cause this will, so stern, always to cede!" M. d'Harville drew near to one of the candelabras on the chimneypiece, and opened the letter of Sarah.

CHAPTER II.

COUNCIL.

RODOLPHE and Clémence conversed together, while M. d'Harville twice read the letter. His countenance remained composed; a nervous trembling, almost imperceptible, agitated his hands alone; then, after a moment's hesitation, he put the note into the pocket of his waistcoat. "At the risk of passing for a savage," said he to Rodolphe, smiling, "I shall ask permission, monseigneur, to go and answer this letter—more important than I thought at first." "Shall I not see you again to-night?" "I do not think that I can have that honour, monseigneur; I hope your royal highness will excuse me." "What a man!" said Rodolphe, gayly. "Will you not try to retain him, madame?" "I dare not attempt what your highness has attempted in vain." "Seriously, my dear Albert, try to return to us as soon as your letter is written; if not, promise to grant me an interview some morning—I have a thousand things to say to you." "Your royal highness overwhelms me," said the marquis, bowing profoundly as he retired.

"Your husband is preoccupied," said Rodolphe to the marquise; "his smile appeared constrained."

"When your royal highness arrived, M. d'Harville was profoundly affected; he had great trouble to conceal it."

"I have arrived, perhaps, at an inopportune moment?" "No, monseigneur. You have even spared me the conclusion of a painful conversation." "How is that?" "I have told M. d'Harville the new line of conduct that I was resolved to follow, promising him support and consolation." "How happy he should be!"

"At first he was as much so as myself; for his tears, his joy, produced an emotion to which I had, as yet, been a stranger. Formerly I thought I revenged myself by addressing him a reproach, a sarcasm. Sad revenge! my sorrow afterward has only been more bitter. While just now—what a difference! I asked my husband if he were going out: he answered me sadly, that he should pass the evening alone, as was usually the case. When I offered to remain with him—if you could have seen his astonishment, monseigneur! how his expression, always sad, became at once radiant. Oh! you were right—nothing more pleasing than to contrive these surprises of happiness!"

"But how did these proofs of goodness on your part lead to this painful conversation of which you have spoken?"

"Alas! monsieur," said Clémence, blushing, "to these hopes succeeded hopes more tender, which I was very guarded not to excite, because it will always be impossible for me to realize them."

"I comprehend: he loves you tenderly."

"As much as I was at first touched with his gratitude, so much was I alarmed at his protestations of love. I could not conceal my alarm. I caused him a sad blow in manifesting thus my invincible repugnance to his love. I regret it. But, at least, M. d'Harville is now forever con-

vinced that he has only to expect from me the most devoted friendship."

"I pity him, without being able to blame you; there are susceptibilities, thus to speak, which are sacred. Poor Albert, so good, so kind! If you knew how much I have been afflicted, for a long time past, with his sadness and dejection, although ignorant of the cause. Let us leave all to time, to reason. By degrees he will recognise the value of the affection you offer him, and he will be resigned to it, as he was resigned before having the touching consolations which you offer him." "And which shall never be wanting, I swear to you, monsieur." "Now let us think of the other unfortunates. I have promised you a good work, having all the charm of a romance in action. I come to fulfil my engagement."

"Already, monseigneur! what happiness?" "Ah! it was a kind of happy inspiration that induced me to take that poor room in the house of the Rue du Temple of which I have spoken to you. You cannot imagine all that I find curious and interesting! In the first place, your protégés of the garret envy the comforts your presence had promised them; they have, however, yet to undergo some sad trials; but I do not wish to make you sad. Some day you shall know how many horrible calamities may overwhelm one single family." "What must be their gratitude towards you!" "It is your name they bless." "You have succoured them in my name, monseigneur!" "To render the charity sweeter to them. Besides, I have only realized your promises." "Oh! I will go and undeceive them: tell them it is to you they owe—"

"Do not do that! you know I have a room in this house: be guarded against any new cowardly acts of your enemies, or of mine; and since the Morels are now out of the reach of want, think of others. Let us think of our *intrigue*. It concerns a poor mother and her daughter, who, formerly in affluence, are at this time, in consequence of an infamous spoliation, reduced to the most frightful misery." "Unfortunate women! and where do they live, monseigneur?" "I do not know." "But how did you find out their situation?"

"Yesterday I went to the Temple. You do not know what the Temple is, Madame la Marquise?" "No, monseigneur." "It is a bazaar very amusing to see. I went there to make some purchases with my neighbour of the fourth." "Your neighbour?" "Have I not my room in the Rue du Temple?"

"I forget it, monseigneur." "This neighbour is a charming little grisette; she calls herself Rigolette; she is always laughing, and never had a lover." "What virtue for a grisette!"

"It is not exactly from virtue that she is virtuous, but because, she says, she has no time to be in love; for she must work from twelve to fifteen hours a day to gain twenty-five sous, on which she lives." "She can live on so small an amount?" "How now! she has even articles of luxury: two birds, who eat more than she does; her little room is as neat as possible, and her dress really quite coquettish." "Live on twenty-five sous a day! she is a prodigy." "A real prodigy of order, labour, economy, and practical philosophy, I assure you; thus I recommend her to you. She is, she says, a very skilful sempstress. At all events, you will not be obliged to wear the clothes she makes for you." "To-morrow I will send her some work."

"Poor girl! to live on so small a sum, and, thus to speak, so unknown to us, who are rich, whose smallest caprices cost a hundred times that amount!" "You will interest yourself—interest yourself, then, in my little protégée, it is agreed; let us return to our other adventure." Here Rodolphe related to the marquise what occurred in the Temple, the finding of the letter in the old secretary, and the story told concerning it by the old marchande. "And you do not know their abode, monseigneur?"

"Unfortunately, no. But I have given orders to M. de Graün to endeavor to discover it, even if he is obliged to apply to the prefecture of the police. It is probable that, stripped of everything, the mother and daughter have sought refuge in some miserably furnished lodgings. If it should be so, we have some hope, for the landlords report every evening the strangers who arrive in the course of the day." "What a singular concurrence of circumstances!" said Madame d'Harville, with astonishment. "This is not all. In a corner of this letter, found in the old secretary, were these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay.*'" "What good fortune! perhaps we can find out something from the duchess," cried Madame d'Harville, with vivacity; then she continued, with a sigh, "But I am ignorant of the name of this woman—how designate her to Madame de Lucenay?" "You must ask her if she does not know a widow, still young, of a distinguished appearance, and whose daughter, aged sixteen or seventeen years, is named Claire." "I remember the name. The name of my daughter! it seems to me a motive the more to interest me in their misfortunes."

"I forgot to tell you that the brother of this widow committed suicide some months ago." "If Madame de Lucenay knows this family," said Madame d'Harville, "such information will suffice to bring them to her mind. Mon Dieu! how desirous I am of going to see her. I will write her a note to-night, so that I shall be sure to find her to-morrow morning. Who can these women be? From what you know of them, monseigneur, they appear to belong to the upper classes of society. And to find themselves reduced to such distress! ah! for them poverty must be doubly frightful."

"And that by the robbery of a notary, a miserable scoundrel, of whom I already know many other misdeeds—a certain Jacques Ferrand." "My husband's notary!" cried Clémence; "the notary of my stepmother! But you are deceived, monseigneur; he is looked upon as one of the most honourable men in the world."

"I have proofs to the contrary. But do not, I pray you, say a word on this subject to any one; he is as crafty as he is criminal, and to unmask him, I have need that he shall not suspect, or, rather, that he shall go on with impunity a short time longer. Yes; it is he who has despoiled these unfortunates, by denying a deposit which, from all appearances, had been placed in his hands by the brother of this widow." "And this sum?" "Was their sole resource! Oh! what a crime—what a crime!" cried Rodolphe; "a crime that nothing can excuse—neither want nor passion. Often does hunger cause robbery, vengeance, murder. But this notary was already rich; and, clothed by society with a character almost holy, with a character which imposes, forces confidence, this man is induced to crime by a cold and implacable cupidity. The assassin only kills you once, and quickly

with his knife: he kills you slowly, by all the horrors of despair and misery into which he plunges you. For a man like this Ferrand, the patrimony of the orphan, the savings of the poor—nothing is sacred! You confide to him gold; this gold tempts him; he makes you a beggar and wretched! By the force of privations and toil, you have assured to yourself bread, and an asylum for your old age; the will of this man tears from your old age this bread and shelter. This is not all. See the effects, the fearful effects of these infamous spoliations: the widow of whom we speak may die of sorrow and distress; her daughter, young and hand some, without support, without resources, accustomed to a competency, unfit, from her education, to gain a living, soon finds herself between starvation and dishonour! she is lost. By this robbery, Jacques Ferrand is the cause of the death of the mother, the ruin of the child he has killed the body of one, he has killed the soul of the other; and this, once more I say it not at once, like other homicides, but with cruelty, and slowly."

Clémence had never yet heard Rodolphe speak with so much bitterness and indignation; she listened in silence, struck with these words of eloquence, doubtless very sad, but which discovered a vigorous hatred of evil. "Pardieu me, madame," said Rodolphe, after a moment's pause; "I cannot restrain my indignation in thinking of the cruel fate which your future protégées may have realized. Ah! believe me, the consequences of ruin and poverty are very seldom exaggerated."

"Oh! on the contrary, I thank you, monseigneur, for having, by these terrible words, still more augmented, if that is possible, the sincere commiseration I feel for these unfortunates. Alas! it is above all for her daughter she must suffer; oh! it is frightful. But we will save them—we will assure them as to the future; is it not so, monseigneur? 'Dieu merci,' I am rich but not as much so as I could wish; now I foresee a new use for money; but, if it is necessary, will speak to M. d'Harville; I will make him so happy that he cannot refuse any of my new caprices. Our protégées are proud, you say monseigneur: I like them better for it; pride in misfortune always proves an elevated mind. I will find the means to save them, without their knowing that they owe the succour they receive to a benefactor. It will be difficult; so much the better! Oh! I have already a project; you shall see, monseigneur, you shall see that I am not wanting in address and cunning."

"I already foresee the most Machiavelian combinations," said Rodolphe, smiling. "But we must first discover them: how I wish it was to-morrow. On leaving Madame de Lucenay I will go to their old lodgings; I will question their neighbours; I will see for myself; I will ask information from everybody. I will compromise myself if it is necessary! I shall be so proud to obtain by myself, and by myself alone, the result I desire: oh! I will succeed; this adventure is so touching. Poor women! it seems to me I feel more interest in them when I think of my child."

Rodolphe, touched with this charitable eagerness, smiled sadly in seeing this young woman of twenty, so handsome, so lovely, trying to forget in noble occupations the domestic troubles which afflicted her; the eyes of Clémence sparkled with vivacity, her cheeks were slightly suffu-

sed; the animation of her gesture, of her speech, gave new attraction to her ravishing physiognomy.

CHAPTER III.

THE SNARE.

MADAME D'HARVILLE perceived that Rodolphe was contemplating her in silence. She blushed, cast down her eyes; then raising them in charming confusion, she said, "You laugh at my enthusiasm, monseigneur? It is because I am impatient to taste those holy joys which are about to reanimate my existence, until now sad and useless. Such, without doubt, was not the life I dreamed of; there is a sentiment, a happiness, more lively still than I can never know; although still very young, I must renounce it!" added Clémence, suppressing a sigh. "But thanks to you, my saviour, always thanks to you, I have created for myself other interests; charity shall replace love. I am already indebted to your advice for such touching emotions! Your words, monseigneur, have so much influence! The more I meditate, the more I reflect on your ideas, the more I find them just, great, and fruitful. Oh! monseigneur, how much goodness your mind discloses! From what source have you, then, drawn these feelings of tender commiseration?" "I have suffered much, I still suffer; this is the reason I know the cause of many sorrows."

"You, monseigneur, you unhappy!" "Yes; for one would say that, to prepare me to solace all kind of sorrows, fate has willed I should undergo them all. A lover, it has struck me through the first woman that I loved with all the blind confidence of youth; a husband, through my wife; a son, it has struck me through my father; a father, through my child."

"I thought, monseigneur, that the grand-duchess did not leave you any child?" "She did not; but before my marriage with her I had a daughter, who died very young. Well! strange as it may appear to you, the loss of this child, whom I had hardly seen, is the sorrow of my life. The older I become, the more profound my regrets! Each year redoubles the bitterness. It seems to increase as her years would have increased. Now she would have been seventeen!"

"And her mother, monseigneur, does she still live?" asked Clémence.

"Oh! do not speak of her!" cried Rodolphe. "Her mother is an unworthy creature, a being browned by egotism and ambition. Sometimes I ask myself if it were not better my child should be dead, than to have remained in the hands of her mother."

Clémence experienced a kind of satisfaction in hearing Rodolphe express himself thus. "Oh! I conceive, then," cried she, "that you regret doubly your daughter!" "I should have loved her so well! and, besides, it seems to me that among us princes there is always in our love for a son a kind of interest of race and name; but a daughter! a daughter! she is loved for herself alone. And when one has seen, alas! humanity under the most sinister aspects, what delight to contemplate a pure and lovely being! to inhale her virgin purity, to watch over her with tender care! A mother the most fond, the most proud of her daughter cannot experience this feeling; she is herself too similar to taste

these ineffable delights: she will appreciate much more the manly qualities of a bold and noble boy. For, in fine, do you not find that that which renders, perhaps, still more touching the love of a mother for her son, a father for his daughter, is, that there is always in these affections a feeble being who has need of protection? The son protects the mother, the father protects the daughter." "Oh, it is true, monseigneur," "But, alas! why understand the ineffable joys, when one can never experience them?" said Rodolphe, dejectedly.

"But pardon me, madame; my regrets and my souvenirs have, in spite of myself, carried me away; you will excuse me?"

"Ah, monseigneur! believe I partake of your sorrows. Have I not the right? Have you not partaken of mine? Unfortunately, the consolations that I can offer you are in vain."

"No, no; the expression of your interest is sweet and salutary to me. It is weakness, but I cannot hear a young girl spoken of without thinking of her whom I have lost."

"These thoughts are so natural! Hold, monseigneur; since I have seen you, I have accompanied, in her visits to the prisons, a lady of my acquaintance, who is a patroness of the work of the young women who are confined at Saint Lazare; this house contains many very culpable beings. If I were not a mother, I should have judged them, doubtless, with still more severity, while I now feel for them pity; much softened in thinking that, perhaps, they had not been lost, except for the state of poverty and neglect they had been in from their infancy. I do not know why, but after these thoughts it seemed to me I loved my child the more."

"Come, courage," said Rodolphe, with a melancholy smile; "this conversation leaves me quite reassured as to you. A salutary path is open to you; in following it, you will pass through, without stumbling, these years of trial, so dangerous for women, and, above all, for a woman gifted as you are; your reward shall be great; you will still have to struggle, to suffer—for you are very young—but you will renew your strength in thinking of the good you have done—of that which you still will do."

Madame d'Harville burst into tears. "At least," said she, "your assistance, your counsels, will never fail me: is it not so, monseigneur?" "Far or near, I shall always take the most lively interest in all that concerns you; always, as much as depends upon me, I will contribute to your happiness; to that of the man to whom I have vowed the most constant friendship."

"Oh! thank you, monseigneur, for this promise," said Clémence, drying her tears; "without your generous support, my strength would abandon me; but, believe me, I swear it here, I will constantly accomplish my duty." At these words, a small door concealed behind the tapestry was opened roughly. Clémence uttered a cry. Rodolphe shuddered. M. d'Harville appeared, pale, and profoundly affected; his eyes were wet with tears. The first astonishment over, the marquis said to Rodolphe, giving him Sarah's letter, "Monseigneur, here is the infamous letter which I received just now before you. I pray you to burn it after you have read it."

Clémence looked at her husband with alarm. "Oh, this is infamous!" cried Rodolphe, indignantly.

"Well, monseigneur, there is something still more infamous than this anonymous scurrility

"—it is my own conduct!" "What do you mean to say?" "A little while ago, instead of showing you this letter frankly, boldly, I concealed it from you; I pretended to be calm, while I had jealousy, anger, and despair in my heart: this is not all. Do you know what I did, monseigneur? I shamefully went and concealed myself behind this door to listen to you—to spy—yes, I have been wretch enough to doubt your honour. Oh! the author of this letter knows to whom he addresses it; he knows how weak my head is. Well, monseigneur, say, after hearing what I have just heard—for I have not lost a word of your conversation, and know why you go to the Rue du Temple—ought I not, on my knees, ask for pardon and pity? and I do it, monseigneur. I do it, Clémence; I have no more hope but in your generosity." "Ah, mon Dieu! my dear Albert, what have I to pardon?" said Rodolphe, extending both hands with the most touching cordiality. "Now you know our secrets, I am delighted. I can preach to you at my leisure. I am your confidant by compulsion, and, what is still better, you are the confidant of Madame d'Harville; that is to say, you now know all you have to expect from that noble heart."

"And you, Clémence, will you pardon me also?"

"Yes; on condition that you will assist me in assuring your own happiness;" and she extended her hand to her husband, who pressed it with emotion. "Ma foi, my dear marquises," cried Rodolphe, "our enemies are unlucky; thanks to them, we are only the more intimate from the past. You never have more justly appreciated Madame d'Harville; she has never been more devoted to you; acknowledge that we are well avenged of the envious and wicked. That will answer while waiting for something better, for I divine from whence this came, and I am not accustomed to suffer patiently the injuries done to my friends. But this regards me. Adieu, madame; here is our *intrigue* discovered; you will no longer be alone in assisting your protégées: be assured we will get up some new mysterious enterprise, which the marquises must be very cunning to discover."

After having accompanied the prince to his carriage, to thank him again, the marquises retired to his own apartments without seeing Clémence again.

CHAPTER IV.

REFLECTIONS.

It would be difficult to describe the tumultuous and contrary sentiments which agitated M. d'Harville when he found himself alone. He acknowledged with joy the falsity of the accusation against Rodolphe and Clémence, but he was also convinced that he must renounce the hope of being loved by her. The more that, in her conversation with Rodolphe, Clémence had shown herself courageous, resolute to do good, the more he bitterly reproached himself for having, with culpable egotism, linked this unhappy young woman to his fate. Far from being consoled from the conversation he had just heard, he fell into a state of sadness, of inexpressible despondency. There is in a life of opulence without employment this terrible disadvantage; nothing turns its attention, nothing protects the mind

from brooding on its sorrows, on itself. Nell being compelled to occupy itself with the necessities of the future, or the labours of each day, it remains entirely a prey to great mental afflictions. Being able to possess all that gold can procure, it desires or regrets violently that which gold alone cannot procure.

The grief of M. d'Harville was desperate, for, after all, he desired nothing but what was just, what was legal.

To these transports of vain anger succeeded a feeling of gloomy dejection. "Oh!" cried he, at once softened and cast down, "it is my fault, it is my fault; poor unhappy woman, I have deceived her, unworthily deceived her! She can, she ought to hate me; and yet, just now again, she evinced the most touching interest for me; but, instead of contenting myself with that, my foolish passions have carried me away. I became tender; I have spoken to her of my love, and hardly had my lips touched her hand, than she trembled with fright. If I could still have had any doubt of the invincible repugnance with which I inspire her, what she has just now said to the prince leaves me no illusion. Oh! it is frightful—frightful!"

"And by what right did she confide to him this hideous secret? it is an unworthy betrayal of confidence! By what right? Alas! by the same right that prisoners have to complain of their executioner. Poor child! so young, so lovely, all that she could find to say that was cruel against the horrible fate to which I have doomed her, is, that such was not the lot she had dreamed of, and that she was very young to renounce love! I know Clémence; the word she has given me, which she has given to the prince, she will henceforth keep; she will be for me the most tender sister. Well! my position is not worthy of envy! to the cold and constrained feelings which existed between us, are going to succeed the most affectionate and the kindest relations, while she might have continued to treat me with a frozen contempt, without my daring to complain."

"Another torture! How I have suffered, mon Dieu! when I thought her culpable—what terrible agony! But no, this fear is vain; Clémence has sworn not to fail in her duties; she will keep her promises; but at what price, mon Dieu! at what price! Just now, when she returned to me with her affectionate words, how her sad, soft, melancholy smile, caused me pain! How much this return to her executioner must have cost her! Poor woman! how handsome she looked! For the first time I felt acute remorse, for until then her haughty coldness was her revenge. Oh, unfortunate man, unfortunate man that I am!"

After a long, sleepless night of bitter reflections, the agitation of M. d'Harville ceased as by enchantment.

He awaited the day with impatience.

CHAPTER V.

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE.

As soon as it was morning, M. d'Harville rang for his valet.

Old Joseph, on entering the room, heard his

master, to his great astonishment, humming a hunting song, a sign, as rare as it was sure, of the good-humour of M. d'Harville.

"Ah! Monsieur le Marquis," said the faithful servant, quite softened, "what a good voice you have! what a shame you do not sing often-er." "Really, Monsieur Joseph, have I a good voice?" said M. d'Harville, laughing. "M. le Marquis might have a voice as hoarse as an owl or a rattle, I should still think he had a good voice." "Hold your tongue, flatterer!"

"Dame! when you sing, Monsieur le Marquis, it is a sign you are contented; and then your voice appears to me the most charming music in the world." "In that case, my old Joseph, learn to open your long ears." "What do you say?"

"You can enjoy this charming music every day."

"You will be happy every day, Monsieur le Marquis?" cried Joseph, clasping his hands with astonished delight. "Every day, my old Joseph! happy every day. Yes, no more sorrow—no more sadness! I can tell this to you, sole and discreet confidant of all my sorrows! I am overjoyed with happiness! My wife is an angel of goodness! she has asked pardon for her past coldness, attributing it to—can you guess? to jealousy!" "To jealousy?"

"Yes! absurd suspicions, caused by anonymous letters!"

"What indignity!" "You comprehend? women have so much self-love! It needed nothing more to separate us; but, happily, last night we had an explanation. I undecieved her; to tell you of her joy would be impossible; for she loves me! oh! how she loves me! Thus, this cruel separation has ceased; judge of my joy!" "Can it be true?" cried Joseph, with tears in his eyes. "It is true, then, Monsieur le Marquis! now you are forever happy, since the love of Madame la Marquise was alone wanting, as you have told me."

"And to whom should I have told it, my poor old Joseph? Do you not possess a still more sorrowful secret? But let us not talk of sorrow; the day is too happy. You see, perhaps, I have wept! it is thus, you see, happiness overpowers me! I so little expected it! How weak I am! Is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, Monsieur le Marquis, you can well weep for joy! you who have wept so much for sorrow! And me, then! Hold! am I not acting as you are? Brave tears! I would not part with them for ten years of my life. I have only one fear, which is, that I shall hardly be able to keep from throwing myself at the feet of Madame la Marquise the first time I see her."

"Old fool! you are as unreasonable as your master! Now I have a fear also." "Which? mon Dieu!" "That this will not last! I am too happy! what is wanting?" "Nothing, Monsieur le Marquis, absolutely nothing." "It is on this account I am mistrustful of happiness so perfect—so complete!" "Alas! if it was not for that, Monsieur le Marquis—but no, I dare not." "I understand you! well, believe your fears are vain; the change that my happiness causes me is so great, so profound, that I am almost sure of being saved!" "How is that?" "My physician has told me a hundred times, that often a violent mental shock sufficed to give or cure this fatal malady. Why should not emotions of happiness produce the same effect?" "If you believe this, Monsieur le Marquis, it will be so—

it is so—you are cured! Why this is, indeed, a blessed day! Ah! as you say, monsieur, Madame la Marquise is a good angel descended from heaven; and I begin to be almost alarmed myself, monsieur; it is, perhaps, too much felicity for one day; but I must think—if to reassure you it only needs a small sorrow—Dieu merci! I have it!" "How?" "One of your friends has received, very fortunately and seasonably, as it happens, a sword-cut—not at all serious, it is true; but no matter, it is enough to make you a little sorry; that there may be, as you desire it, a little trouble on this happy day. It is true, that in regard to that, it had been better if the thrust had been more dangerous; but we must be contented as it is." "Will you be quiet? And of whom do you speak?" "Of M. le Duc de Lucenay. He is wounded! a scratch on the arm. M. le Duc came yesterday to see monsieur, and he said he would come this morning and ask for a cup of tea." "Poor Lucenay! and why did you not tell me?" "Last night I was not able to see Monsieur le Marquis." After a moment's thought, M. d'Harville replied, "You are right; this light sorrow will doubtless satisfy jealous destiny. But an idea has just struck me; I have a mind to have this morning a déjeuner de garçons, all friends of M. de Lucenay, to congratulate him on the happy result of his duel; he will be enchanted."

"A la bonne heure! Monsieur le Marquis! Joy forever! Make up lost time. How many covers? so that I can give the orders to the Maître d'Hôtel." "Six, in the little winter breakfast-parlour." "And the invitations?" "I will go and write them. A man from the stables can take them round on horseback. It is early; they will all be found at home. Ring."

M. d'Harville entered his cabinet, and wrote the following letters, without any other address than the name of the invited:

"My dear * * *—This is a circular; an impromptu is in agitation. Lucenay is to come and breakfast with me this morning; he counts only on a tête-à-tête; cause him a very agreeable surprise by joining me, and a few other of his friends, whom I have also advised."

"At noon, precisely. A. D'HARVILLE."

"Let some one mount a horse immediately," said M. d'Harville to a servant who answered the bell, "and take these letters." Then, turning to Joseph, he directed him to address them as follows: "M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy. Lucenay cannot do without him," said M. d'Harville to himself. "M. de Monville—one of his travelling companions. Lord Douglass—his faithful partner at whist. The Baron de Sézannes—the friend of his youth. Have you written?"

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis." "Send these letters without losing a moment," said M. d'Harville. "Ah! Philippe, ask M. Doublet to come to me." The servant retired. "Well! what is the matter?" asked M. d'Harville of Joseph, who looked at him with amazement.

"I cannot get over it, monsieur! I never saw you so gay; and, besides, you, who are commonly so pale, you have a fine colour—your eyes sparkle." "Happiness, my old Joseph! happiness! Ah! now you must assist me in a scheme. You must go and find out from Mademoiselle Juliette, she who, I believe, has charge of the diamonds of Madame d'Harville."

"Yes, Monsieur le Marquis, it is Mademoi-

belles Juliette who takes care of them; I helped her, not a week ago, to clean them."

"You go and ask her the name and address of the jeweller of her mistress; but she must not say a word on the subject to the marquise!" "Ah! I understand, monsieur! A surprise."

"Go quickly. Here is M. Doublet. My dear Monsieur Doublet, I am going to frighten you," said he, laughing. "I am going to make you utter cries of distress."

"Me! Monsieur le Marquis?" "You!" "I will do all in my power to satisfy Monsieur le Marquis." "I am going to spend a great deal of money, Monsieur Doublet—an enormous amount of money." "What of that, Monsieur le Marquis? we are able to do it, Dieu merci! able to do it." "For a long time I am possessed with a notion of building. I have it in contemplation to add a gallery on the garden, to the right wing of the hotel. After a long hesitation, I have quite decided. You must tell my architect to-day, so that he can come and talk over the plans. Well! M. Doublet, you don't groan over this expense?" "I can assure Monsieur le Marquis that I do not groan." "This gallery will be destined for fêtes; I wish it to be built, as it were, by enchantment; now, enchantments being very dear, you must sell 15 or 20,000 livres of 'rentes,' to be ready to furnish the funds, for I wish the work commenced as soon as possible." Joseph entered.

"Here is, Monsieur le Marquis, the address of the jeweller; his name is M. Baudoin." "My dear Monsieur Doublet, you will go, I beg you, to this jeweller, and tell him to bring here, in an hour, a diamond necklace worth about two thousand louis. Women can never have too many jewels, now that dresses are trimmed with them. You will arrange with the jeweller for the payment." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis. It is on account of the surprise that I do not groan this time! Diamonds are like buildings, the value remains; and, besides, this surprise to the marquise! It is as I had the honour to say the other day—there is not in the world a happier man than Monsieur le Marquis."

"This good M. Doublet!" said M. d'Harville, smiling; "his felicitations are always so inconceivably apropos."

"It is their sole merit, Monsieur le Marquis; and they have, perhaps, this merit because they come from the bottom of the heart. I go to the jeweller," said M. Doublet, retiring.

As soon as he was gone, M. d'Harville paced the floor of his cabinet, his arms crossed on his breast, his eye fixed and meditative.

Suddenly his countenance changed; it no longer expressed the content, of which the attendant and the old servant had just been the dupe, but a calm, cold, and mournful resolution. After having walked some time, he seated himself as if overcome by the weight of his troubles, with his face buried in his hands. Then he suddenly arose, wiped away a tear which moistened his burning eyelid, and said, with an effort, "Come, courage."

He wrote letters to several persons about insignificant objects; but in the letters he appointed or put off different meetings several days. This correspondence finished, Joseph came in; he was so gay that he so far forgot himself as to sing in his turn. "Monsieur Joseph, you have a very fine voice," said his master, smiling. "Ma foi, so much the worse, M. le Marquis, I did not know it; something sings so loudly with-

in that it must be heard without." "You will put these letters in the postoffice." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis; but where will you receive these gentlemen?" "Here, in my cabinet; they will smoke after breakfast, and the odour of the tobacco will not reach Madame d'Harville." At this moment the noise of a carriage was heard in the courtyard. "It is Madame le Marquise, who is going out; she ordered her horses this morning at an early hour," said Joseph. "Run, then, and beg her to come here before she goes out." "Yes, Monsieur le Marquis."

Hardly had the domestic gone when M. d'Harville approached a glass and examined himself minutely. "Well, well," said he, in a gloomy tone; "that's right—the cheeks flushed, the eye sparkling—joy or fear—no matter—as long as they are deceived. Let us see now—a smile on the lips. There are so many kinds of smiles. But who can distinguish the false from the real? who can penetrate under this lying mask, to say, this smile conceals a black despair? no one, happily, no one! oh! yes, love could never be mistaken; no, its instinct would enlighten it. But I hear—my wife—my wife! 'Come, to your post, inauspicious buffoon.'" "Good-day, Albert, my good brother," said Madame d'Harville, with a sweet smile, and giving him her hand. "But what is the matter, my friend? You appear so happy and gay!"

"It is, that at the moment you came in, my dear little sister, I was thinking of you. Besides, I was under the influence of an excellent resolution." "That does not surprise me." "That which took place yesterday, your admirable generosity, the noble conduct of the prince, all this gave me much to think about, and I am a convert to your ideas. You would not have excused me last night if I had too easily renounced your love, I am sure, Clémence." "What language, what a happy change!" cried Madame d'Harville. "Oh! I was very sure, that in addressing myself to your heart, to your reason, you would comprehend me."

"Now I have no longer any doubts for the future."

"Nor I, Clémence, I assure you. Yes, since the resolution I have taken this night, the future, which seemed to me dark and gloomy, has become singularly cleared up—simplified." "Nothing is more natural, my friend; now we march towards one object, leaning fraternally on each other: at the end of our career we will find ourselves as we are to-day. In fine, I desire that you shall be happy, and this shall be so, for I have placed it there," said Clémence, putting her finger on his forehead. Then she resumed, with a charming expression, lowering her hand to his heart: "No, I am mistaken; it is there that this good thought will incessantly watch for you, and for me also; and you shall see, monsieur my brother, what is the obstinacy of a devoted heart." "Dear Clémence," answered M. d'Harville, with constrained emotion; then, after a pause, he added gayly, "I begged you to come here before your departure to inform you that I could not take tea with you this morning. I have a number of persons to breakfast with me; it is a kind of impromptu to congratulate M. de Lucenay on the happy issue of his duel."

Madame d'Harville blushed in thinking of the cause of this duel; she said to her husband, "See, now, what a coincidence. M. de Lucenay comes to breakfast with you; I go, perhaps very indiscreetly, to invite myself to do the same with

Madame de Lucenay; for I have much to talk to her about my unknown protégées. From there I intend to go to the prison of Saint Lazare, with Madame de Blinval, for you do not know all my ambition; at this moment I am *intriguing* to be admitted in the work for the young 'détenues.'"

"Truly, you are insatiable," said the marquis; "thus," added he, restraining with great difficulty his emotion, "thus I shall see you no more—to-day!" he hastened to add. "Are you vexed that I go out this morning so early?" asked Madame d'Harville, quickly, astonished at the tone of his voice. "If you ask it, I will put off my visit to Madame de Lucenay." The marquis was on the point of betraying himself; he said in the most affectionate manner, "Yes, my dear little sister, I am as much vexed to see you go out, as I shall be impatient to see you return; these are defects I shall never correct myself for."

"And you will do well, my friend; for I should be very angry." A bell announcing a visit resounded throughout the hotel.

"Here are, doubtless, some of your guests," said Madame d'Harville; "I leave you—apropos, what are you going to do to-night? If you have not disposed of your evening, I require that you shall accompany me to the Italians; perhaps, now, music will please you more!" "I place myself under your orders with the greatest pleasure." "Are you going out soon? Shall I see you again before dinner?" "I am not going out. You will find me here." "Then, when I return, I will come and see if your bachelor breakfast has been amusing." "Adieu, Clémence." "Adieu, my friend—à bientôt!" I leave you the field clear; I wish you much fun. Be very gay!" And after having cordially pressed the hand of her husband, Clémence went out by one door a moment before M. de Lucenay entered by another.

"She wishes me much amusement—she tells me to be gay. To this word adieu, to this last cry of my soul in its agony, to this word of eternal separation, she has added, à bientôt; and she went away tranquilly—smiling—aloha—this does honour to my dissimulation. By Heavens! I did not think myself so good a player. But here is Lucenay."

CHAPTER VI.

DEJEUNER DE GARÇONS.

M. de LUCENAY entered the room; his wound had been so slight that he did not carry his arm in a sling; his countenance was always cheerful and contemptuous, his movements always restless, his mania to make a bustle insurmountable. Yet, notwithstanding his caprices, his pleasantries in very bad taste, and his enormous nose, he was not, as we have already said, a vulgar man, thanks to a kind of natural dignity and courageous impertinence which never abandoned him. "How indifferent you must suppose me to be as regards anything concerning you, my dear Henry!" said M. d'Harville, extending his hand to M. de Lucenay; "but it is only this morning I heard of your disagreeable adventure." "Disagreeable! come now, marquis! I got the worth of my money, as they say. I never laughed so much in my life! this excellent M. Robert appeared to be so solemnly de-

termined not to pass for having the 'pituite.' Exactly; you don't know it was the cause of the duel! The other night, at the ambassade of ***. I asked him, before your wife and the Countess McGregor, how he got on with his pituite—indeed; for, between us, he had not this inconvenience. But never mind. You understand—to have that said before handsome women, it is annoying."

"What folly! I recognise you there! But who is this M. Robert?"

"Ma foi! I don't know anything about him; he is a gentleman whom I met aux eaux; he passed before us in the winter garden at the embassy; I called him to play off this joke; he answered the second day after by giving me, very gallantly, a nice little thrust with his sword. But don't let us talk of this nonsense. I come to beg a cup of tea." Saying this, M. de Lucenay threw himself at full length on the sofa; after which, introducing the end of his cane between the wall and the frame of a picture placed over his head, he commenced moving it backward and forward.

"I expected you, my dear Henry, and I have arranged a little surprise for you." "Oh, bah! and what is it?" cried M. de Lucenay, pushing the picture in a very ticklish position.

"You'll end by pulling that picture on to your head."

"It is true, pardieu! you have the eye of an eagle. But your surprise, what is it?" "I have sent for some of our friends to breakfast with us." "Ah! good; par exemple—for that, marquis bravo! bravissimo! archibravissimo!" screamed M. de Lucenay, striking heavy blows on the sofa cushions. "And whom shall we have? Saint Rémy?" "No; he has been in the country for some days. What the devil can he manage to do in the country in winter?" "Are you sure he is not in Paris?" "Very sure; I wrote to him to be my second; he was absent; I fell back on Lord Douglas and Césanne." "That is fortunate; they breakfast with us."

"Bravo! bravo!" cried M. de Lucenay, anew. Then he turned and twisted himself on the sofa, accompanying his loud cries with a series of somersets that would have astonished a rope-dancer. The acrobatic evolutions of the duke were interrupted by the arrival of M. de Saint Rémy. "I have no need to ask if Lucenay was here," said the viscount, gayly. "He can be heard below." "How! is it you, beautiful Sylvan, countryman! wolf's cub!" cried the duke, much surprised; "I thought you were in the country." "I came back yesterday; I received the invitation just now, and here I am, quite delighted at this surprise," and M. de Saint Rémy gave his hand to M. de Lucenay, and then to the marquis.

"I take this very kind in you, my dear Saint Rémy. Is it not natural that the friends of Lucenay should rejoice at the happy issue of this duel, which, after all, might have had a very grievous result?"

"But," resumed the duke, obstinately, "what have you been doing in the country in midwinter, Saint Rémy? that beats me."

"How curious he is!" said the viscount, addressing M. d'Harville. "I wish to wean myself from Paris, since I must so soon quit it."

"Ah! yes, this beautiful imagination to attach yourself to the legation of France at Gerolstein. None of your nonsense and stuff about diplomacy; you will never go there. My wife says so, and everybody repeats it." "I assure you that

* A bientôt. The pleasure of soon seeing one again.

Madame de Lucenay is mistaken, like every one else." "She told you before me that it was a folly." "I have committed so many in my lifetime!"

"Elegant and charming follies, very well, so as to ruin yourself, as they say, by your Sardanapalus's magnificence, I admit that; but to go and bury yourself in such a hole of a court at Gérostein! Come, now, this is no folly, it is a 'bêtise,' and you are too sensible to do a stupid thing." "Take care, my dear Lucenay, in abusing this German court you will have a quarrel with D'Harville, the intimate friend of the grand-duke, who, besides, received me most kindly the other night at the ambassade of * * *, where I was presented to him." "Really! my dear Henry," said M. d'Harville, "if you knew the grand-duke as I know him, you would comprehend that Saint Rémy could have no repugnance to go and pass some time at Gérostein." "I believe you, marquis, although he is said to be proudly original, your grand-duke; but that doesn't prevent that a beau like Saint Rémy, the finest flower among pea blossoms, cannot live, excepting at Paris; his value is only known at Paris."

The other guests of M. d'Harville had just arrived, when Joseph entered and said some words in a low tone to his master.

"Gentlemen, will you allow me," said the marquis; "it is the jeweller of my wife, who brings me some diamonds to choose for her—a surprise. You know that, Lucenay, we—you and I—are husbands of the old school." "Oh! pardieu, if you talk of a surprise," cried the duke, "my wife gave me one yesterday; and a famous one, I tell you!" "Some splendid present?" "She asked for a hundred thousand francs." "And as you are a 'magnifico,' you have—" "Lent them! they will be mortgaged on her Arnouville farm—short accounts make long friends. But never mind; to lend in two hours 100,000 francs to some one who wants them, is genteel and rare. Is it not, spendthrift? you who are a 'connaisseur' in loans," said the Duke de Lucenay, laughing, without dreaming of the bearing of his speech. Notwithstanding his audacity, the viscount at first slightly blushed; then he said, with effrontery, "One hundred thousand francs! why, it is enormous. How can a woman ever have need of such an amount? We men, that's another story."

"Ma foi, I don't know what she wanted with the money. Besides, it is all the same to me. Some bills, probably, some urgent creditors; that's her look-out. And, besides, you well know, my dear Saint Rémy, that lending her my money, it would have been in the worst taste in the world to ask what she wanted it for." "It is, however, a very excusable curiosity in those who lend, to wish to know what the borrower wants to do with the money," said the viscount, laughing.

"Parbleu! Saint Rémy," said M. d'Harville, "you, who have such excellent taste, you must aid me in choosing the set I intend for my wife; your approbation will sanction my choice, your approval is the law."

The jeweller entered, carrying several caskets in a large leather bag. "Ah! here is M. Baudoin!" said M. de Lucenay. "At your service, Monsieur le Duc." "I am sure that it is you who ruin my wife with your infernal and dazzling temptations!" said M. de Lucenay. "Madame la Duchesse has only had her diamonds

reset this winter," said the jeweller, slightly embarrassed. "I have this moment left them with Madame la Duchesse, on my way here."

M. de Saint Rémy knew that Madame de Lucenay, to come to his assistance, had changed her diamonds for false ones; this conversation was very disagreeable to him, but he said boldly,

"These husbands, how curious they are! do not answer, Monsieur Baudoin." "Curious! ma foi, no," answered the duke; "it is my wife who pays; she is richer than I am." During this conversation, M. Baudoin had displayed on a bureau several admirable necklaces of rubies and diamonds. "How splendid! and these stones, how divinely they are cut!" said Lord Douglass. "Alas! monsieur," answered the jeweller, "I employed in this work one of the best artisans in Paris; unfortunately, he has become mad, and I shall never find his equal. My broker tells me that it is probably misery which has turned his brain, poor man." "Misery! and you confide diamonds to a man in poverty!"

"Certainly, monsieur, and I have never known an instance of an artisan concealing or secreting anything confided to him, however poor he might be." "How much for this necklace?" asked M. d'Harville.

"Monsieur le Marquis will remark that the stones are of splendid cutting, and the purest water, almost all of the same size."

"Here are some worthy precautions most menacing for your purse," said M. de Saint Rémy, laughing; "expect, now, D'Harville, some exorbitant price." "Come, Monsieur Baudoin, your lowest price?" said M. d'Harville. "I do not wish to make Monsieur le Marquis bargain, so I say the lowest is 42,000 francs."

"Messieurs!" cried M. de Lucenay, "we husbands, let us admire D'Harville in silence. To arrange a surprise for his wife for 42,000 francs! The devil! don't go and noise that abroad; it will be a detestable example." "Laugh as much as you please, gentlemen," said the marquis, gayly. "I am in love with my wife, I do not conceal it; I boast of it!" "That is easily seen," said M. de Saint Rémy; "such a present speaks more than all the protestations in the world."

"I take this necklace, then," said M. d'Harville, "if you approve of this black enamel setting, Saint Rémy." "It sets off to advantage the brilliancy of the stones; they are beautifully arranged."

"I decide, then, for this necklace," said M. d'Harville. "You will have to settle with M. Doublet, my intendant, Monsieur Baudoin." "M. Doublet has advised me, Monsieur le Marquis," said the jeweller, and he went out, after having put in his sack, without counting them, the different sets of jewels which he had brought, and which M. de Saint Rémy had for a long time handled and examined during this conversation. M. d'Harville, in giving the necklace to Joseph, who awaited his orders, whispered to him, "Mlle. Juliette must put these diamonds quietly with those of her mistress, without her suspecting it, so that the surprise will be complete." At this moment the Maître d'Hôtel announced that the breakfast was served; the guests of the marquis passed into the breakfast-room and seated themselves at table.

"Do you know, my dear D'Harville," said M. de Lucenay, "that this house is one of the most elegant and best arranged in Paris?"

"It is commodious enough, but it wants space; my project is to add a gallery on the garden. Madame d'Harville desires to give some grand balls, and our three saloons are not large enough; besides, I find nothing more inconvenient than the encroachments made by a fête on the apartments which one habitually occupies, and from which, for the time, you are exiled." "I am of your opinion," said M. de Saint Rémy; "nothing is in worse taste, more in the 'bourgeois' fashion, than these forced removals by authority of a ball or concert. To give fêtes really splendid, without any inconvenience to one's self, a particular suite of apartments must be arranged exclusively for them; and, besides, vast and splendid saloons, destined for grand balls, ought to have a different character, style, from the rooms in ordinary occupation: there is between these two species of apartments the same difference as between a splendid fresco and an easel picture." "He is right," said M. d'Harville; "what a pity, messieurs, that Saint Rémy has not twelve or fifteen hundred thousand livres income! what wonders we should enjoy!"

"Since we have the happiness to enjoy a representative government," said the Duke de Lucenay, "ought not the country to vote a million a year to Saint Rémy, and charge him to represent at Paris French taste and fashion, which would thus decide the fashion of Europe, of the world?" "Adopted!" was cried in chorus. "And this million should be annually raised, in form of a tax on these abominable misers who, possessors of enormous fortunes, shall be arraigned, tried, and convicted of living like skinflints," added M. de Lucenay. "And as such," said M. d'Harville, "condemned to defray the magnificences which they ought to display."

"While waiting for the decision which will legalize the supremacy which Saint Rémy now exercises in fact," said M. d'Harville, "I shall ask his advice for the gallery I am about to construct."

"My feeble lights are at your disposal, D'Harville."

"And when shall this inauguration take place, mon cher?"

"Next year, I suppose, for I am going to commence immediately."

"What a man of projects you are!" "I have many others, *ma foi*. I contemplate a complete change at Val Richer."

"Your estate in Burgundy?" "Yes; there are some admirable plans to execute there, if, always, God spares my life."

"Poor old man! But have you not lately bought a farm near Val Richer to add to your estate?" "Yes, a very good affair that my notary advised."

"And who is this rare and precious notary who advises such good affairs?" "M. Jacques Ferrand." At this name a slight shade passed over the brow of the viscount. "Is he really an honest man, as he is reputed to be?" asked he, carelessly, of M. d'Harville, who then remembered what Rodolphe had related to Clémence concerning the notary.

"Jacques Ferrand? what a question; why, he is a man of antique probity!" said M. de Lucenay. "As respected as respectable." "Very pious—that hurts no one." "Excessively avaricious—which is a guarantee for his clients."

"He is, in fine, one of our notaries of the old school, who ask you for whom you take them

when you speak of a receipt for money confided to them." "For no other cause than that, I would confide my whole fortune to him." "But where the devil, Saint Rémy, did you get your doubts concerning this worthy man, of proverbial integrity?" "I am only the echo of vague rumours, otherwise I have no reason to deny this phœnix of notaries. But to return to your projects, D'Harville: what are you going to build at Val Richer? The chateau is said to be superb."

"You shall be consulted, my dear Saint Rémy, and sooner, perhaps, than you think, for I delight in these works; it seems to me there is nothing more pleasant than to have your plans spread out for years to come. To-day this project—in a year this one—still later some other; add to this a charming wife whom one adores, who is the motive in all your plans, and, *ma foi*, life passes gently enough." "I believe you, *pardieu*! it is a real paradise on earth." "Now, messieurs," said D'Harville, when breakfast was over, "if you will smoke a cigar in my cabinet, you will find some excellent ones there."

They arose from the table and returned to the cabinet of the marquis; the door of his sleeping apartment, which communicated with it, was open. We have already said that the sole ornament of this room was a panoply of arms. M. de Lucenay, having lighted a cigar, followed the marquis into his chamber. "Here are some splendid guns, truly; *ma foi*, I do not know which to prefer, the French or the English." "Douglass!" cried M. de Lucenay, "come, then, and see if these guns will not compare with the best *Mantons*." Lord Douglass, Saint Rémy, and two other guests entered the chamber of the marquis to examine the arms.

M. d'Harville took a pistol, cocked it, and said, laughing, "Here, messieurs, is the universal panacea for all woes, the spleen, ennui." And he placed the muzzle laughingly to his mouth. "Ma foi! I prefer another specific," said Saint Rémy; "this is only good in desperate cases."

"Yes, but it is so prompt," said D'Harville. "Click! and it is done; the will is not more rapid. Really, it is marvellous!"

"Take care then, D'Harville, these pleasures are always dangerous, and accident might happen," said M. de Lucenay, seeing the marquis again place the pistol to his lips.

"Parbleu, mon cher, do you think that if it was loaded I would play these tricks?" "Doubtless no, but it is always wrong." "Look here, messieurs, this is the way they do it; the barrel is introduced delicately between the teeth, and then—"

"Mon Dieu! how foolish you are, D'Harville, when you once get a going," said M. de Lucenay, shrugging his shoulders.

"The finger is placed on the trigger," added M. d'Harville.

"Is he not a child—childish at his age?"

"A little movement on the lock," continued the marquis, "and one goes straight to the land of spirits."

With these words, the pistol went off.

M. d'Harville had blown his brains out.

We will renounce the task; we cannot describe the affright, the amazement, of the guests of M. d'Harville.

The next day would be seen in a newspaper:

"Yesterday an event, as unforeseen as deplorable, agitated the whole Faubourg St. Ger-

main. One of those imprudences, which lead every year to such fatal accidents, has caused a most lamentable affair. Here are the facts, which we have gathered, and whose authenticity we can guaranty:

"M. le Marquis d'Harville, possessor of an immense fortune, hardly twenty-six years of age, noted for the elevation of his character and the goodness of his heart, married to a lady whom he adored, had invited a few friends to breakfast. On leaving the table, they passed into the sleeping apartment of M. d'Harville, where was displayed several valuable arms. In showing some of the guns to his guests, M. d'Harville, in jest, placed a pistol, which he did not know was loaded, to his lips. In his security, he drew the trigger; it went off! and the unhappy young man fell dead, with his skull fractured! The frightful consternation of the surrounding friends may easily be imagined, to whom, but a moment before, in the bloom of youth, he had just been conversing of his projects for the future! And as if all the circumstances attending this painful event should be more cruel from contrast, the same morning, M. d'Harville, wishing to surprise his wife, had just purchased a valuable necklace. And it is just at this moment, when, perhaps, life never appeared more smiling, more desirable, that he falls a victim to a deplorable accident.

"Before such a misfortune, all reflections are useless; we can only remain, as it were, annihilated by the inscrutable decrees of Providence."

We quote the papers merely to show that general belief attributed the death of M. d'Harville to a deplorable accident. It is hardly necessary to say, that M. d'Harville carried with him to the tomb the mysterious secret of this voluntary death. Yes, voluntary; and calculated and meditated with as much sang-froid as generosity, so that Clémence could not have the slightest suspicion of the true cause of this suicide.

Thus the project of which M. d'Harville had conversed with his friends and his intendant, his confidential communications to his old servant, the surprise which he arranged for his wife, were just so many snares laid for public credulity.

How could a man be supposed about to kill himself, who was so much occupied with plans for the future—so desirous of pleasing his wife? His death was then attributed, and could only be attributed, to an imprudence. As to his resolution, an incurable despair had dictated it.

"My death alone can dissolve these ties—it must be—I shall kill myself." And this is the reason why M. d'Harville had accomplished this grave, this melancholy sacrifice.

If a law of divorce had existed, would he have committed suicide? No! He could have repaired in part the evil he had done; restored his wife to liberty; permitted her to find happiness in another union. The inexorable immutability of the law, then, often renders certain faults irremediable; or, as in this case, only allows them to be effaced by a new crime.

CHAPTER VII.

SAINT LAZARE.

We think we ought to inform the most scru-

pulous of our readers that the prison of Saint Lazare, specially destined to prostitutes and female thieves, is daily visited by several ladies, whose charities, whose name, whose social position, command the respect of all. These ladies, brought up amid the splendours of fortune—these ladies, who with good reason are classed among the most elevated in society, come every week to pass long hours with the miserable prisoners of Saint Lazare. Observing in these degraded beings the least aspiration after virtue, the least regret for a past crime, they encourage the better tendencies and repentance; and, by the powerful magic of these words, *duty, honour, virtue*, sometimes they rescue from the depths of degradation one of these abandoned, despised, ruined beings.

Accustomed to the refinements of the best society, these courageous women leave their houses, press their lips to the virginal cheek of their daughters, pure as the angels of heaven, and go to the gloomy prisons to brave the gross indifference or the criminal conversation of these thieves and prostitutes.

Faithful to their mission of high morality, they valiantly descend into this infected receptacle, place the hand on all these ulcerated hearts, and if some feeble pulsation of honour reveals to them the slightest hope of saving them, they contend and tear from an irrevocable perdition the wretched being of whom they do not despair. The scrupulous reader, to whom we address ourselves, will calm, then, his susceptibility in thinking that he will only hear and see, after all, what these venerated women see and hear every day. Without daring to establish an ambitious parallel between their mission and ours, may we say, that that which also sustains us in this painful, difficult work, is the conviction of having awakened some noble sympathies for the unfortunate who are honest, courageous, worthy, for sincere repentance, for a simple and "naïve" uprightness, and to have inspired disgust, aversion, horror, the salutary fear of all that which was absolutely impure and criminal? We have not recoiled before descriptions the most hideously true, thinking that, like fire, true morality purifies all.

Our only hope is to call the attention of people of wealth, and those who reflect on these things, to the great social miseries, the reality of which may be deplored, but not contested.

This work, which we recognise without difficulty as a *bad book*, looking at it as a work of art—but we maintain that it is not a *bad book* in a moral point of view—this work, we say, had it not had, in its ephemeral career, but one single one of the results of which we have spoken, we should be very proud, honoured by our attempt. What more glorious recompense for us than the benedictions of some poor family, who should owe their relief to the thoughts we have awakened?

All this is said in reference to the new peregrinations we propose to the reader. After having, we hope, appeased his scruples, we shall introduce him to Saint Lazare, an immense edifice, of imposing and gloomy aspect, situated in the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis.

Ignorant of the terrible drama that was passing at home, Madame d'Harville had gone to the prison, after having obtained some information from Madame de Lucenay concerning the two unhappy women whom the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand had plunged into distress. Madame

de Blinval, one of the patronesses before spoken of, not being able to accompany Clémence to Saint Lazare, she came alone. She was received with much kindness by the director, and by several lady inspectresses, known by their black dresses and a blue riband with a silver medal.

One of these, a woman of advanced age, of a soft and grave expression, remained alone with Madame d'Harville, in a little saloon adjoining the office.

Madame Armand, the inspectress who had remained alone with Madame d'Harville, possessed to an extreme degree this foreknowledge, this insight into the character of the prisoners. Her word, her judgment, was of paramount authority in the house.

She said to Clémence: "Since Madame la Marquise has been kind enough to request me to point out those of our inmates who, from good conduct or sincere repentance, should merit her interest, I believe I can recommend an unfortunate, whom I think more unhappy than culpable; for I do not think I deceive myself in affirming that it is not too late to save this young girl, a poor child of sixteen or seventeen years at most."

"And for what has she been confined?"

"She is guilty of being found in the Champs Elysées in the evening. As it is forbidden to those of her class, under very severe penalties, to frequent, either day or night, certain places, and the Champs Elysées are among the number of these prohibited places, she was arrested."

"And she appears interesting to you?"

"I have never seen more regular or more ingenuous features. Imagine, Madame la Marquise, a picture of the Virgin. That which gave still more to her appearance a most modest expression was, that when she came here she was dressed like a peasant girl of the environs of Paris." "She is, then, a country girl?" "No, Madame la Marquise. The inspectors recognised her. She lived in a horrible house in the cité, from which she was absent for two or three months; but as she has not demanded to have her name erased from the registers of the police, she remained under the control of the officers who sent her here." "But perhaps she left Paris to endeavour to reinstate herself?" "I think so, madame. I felt at once interested in her. I interrogated her as to the past; I asked her if she came from the country, telling her to be of good cheer, if, as I hoped, she wished to return to the paths of virtue."

"What did she reply?" "Lifting on me her large blue, melancholy eyes, and full of tears, she said to me, in a tone of angelic sweetness, 'I thank you, madame, for your kindness, but I cannot speak of the past; I have been arrested—I was wrong—I do not complain.' 'But where do you come from? Where have you been since you left the cité? If you have been to the country to seek an honourable existence, say so; prove it; we will write to the prefect to obtain your discharge. You shall be erased from the police lists, and your good resolutions shall be encouraged.' 'I entreat you, madame, do not interrogate me; I cannot answer you,' she replied. 'But when you leave here, do you wish to return to this horrible house again?' 'Oh! never!' she cried. 'What will you do, then?' 'God knows!' she replied, letting her head fall on her breast." "This is very strange! She expresses herself—" "In very good terms,

madame; her deportment is timid, respectful, but without meanness. I will say more. Notwithstanding the extreme sweetness of her voice and her look, there is at times in her accent, in her attitude, a kind of sorrowful pride which confounds me. If she did not belong to the unhappy class of which she is a part, I should almost think that this pride is a soul conscious of its elevation."

CHAPTER VIII.

MONT SAINT JEAN.

The clock of the prison of Saint Lazare struck two.

To the severe frost which had reigned for some days, a temperature, soft, mild, almost springlike, had succeeded; the rays of the sun were reflected on the water of a large square basin, with a stone margin, situated in the middle of a court, planted with trees and surrounded by high, gloomy walls, pierced with a number of grated windows; wooden benches were placed here and there in this vast enclosure, which served as a promenade for the prisoners.

The tinkling of a bell announcing the hour of recreation, the prisoners noisily rushed into the court through a strong-wicket door which was opened for them. These women, dressed in uniform, wore black caps and long frocks of blue woollen, confined by a belt and iron buckle. There were two hundred prostitutes there, condemned for infringements of the particular laws which register them, and place them without the common law.

At the sight of this collection of lost creatures, one cannot prevent the sad thought, that many among them have been pure and virtuous, at least some time. We make this restriction, because that a great number have been vitiated, corrupted, depraved, not only from their youth, but from their most tender infancy, as we shall see directly.

When the prisoners rushed into the court, screeching and shouting, it was easy to see that joy alone at escaping from labour did not render them so noisy. After having pushed through the only door that led to the yard, the crowd separated and made a circle around a deformed being, whom they overwhelmed with hootings.

She was a small woman of about thirty-six to forty years of age, short, thick set, crooked, having the neck sunk between the two unequal shoulders. They had taken off her cap, and her hair, of a blonde, or rather faded yellow, uncombed, tangled, striped with gray, fell on her low and stupid face. She was dressed in a blue frock like the other prisoners, and carried under her arm a little bundle tied up in a miserable, ragged handkerchief. She tried to ward off the threatened blows with her left arm.

Nothing could be more sadly grotesque than the features of this poor creature: it was a ridiculous and hideous face, lengthened to a snout, wrinkled, tanned, and dirty, pierced with two nostrils, and two little red eyes, squinting and bloodshot; in turn supplicating or angry, she implored, she scolded, but they laughed more at her complaints than at her threats. This woman was the butt of the prisoners. One thing alone, however, should have saved her from their bad treatment; she was about to become a mother. But her ugliness, her imbecility, and

the habit they had to look upon her as a victim devoted to the general amusement, rendered her persecutors implacable, notwithstanding their ordinary respect for maternity. Among the most furious of the enemies of Mont Saint Jean (this was the name of the drudge), could have been remarked La Louve. La Louve was a tall girl of about twenty, active, masculine, and with rather regular features; her coarse, black hair was shaded with red; her face was disfigured with pimples; her thick lips were slightly covered with a bluish down; her dark eyebrows, very thick and heavy, met above her large brown eyes; something violent, ferocious, brutal, in her expression, a kind of habitual laugh, which, lifting her upper lip when she was angry, showing her white and scattering teeth, explains her surname of La Louve (the wolf). Nevertheless, this face expressed more audacity and insolence than cruelty; in a word, one can comprehend that, more vicious than thoroughly bad, this woman was yet susceptible of some good feelings, as the inspectors had related to Madame d'Harville. "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! what have I done to you?" cried Mont Saint Jean; "why do you treat me so?"

"Because it amuses us. Because you are only good to be tormented. It is your trade. Look at yourself; you will see you have no right to complain." "But you know I do not complain until I can't stand it any longer."

"Well, we'll leave you alone if you will tell us why you are called Mont Saint Jean." "Yes, yes, tell us that."

"And I have told you this a hundred times: it is an old soldier, whom I once loved, and who was called so, because he was wounded in the battle of Mont Saint Jean. I took his name. Are you content now? You make me repeat the same things!" "If he looked like you he was a beauty! He must have been one of the 'Invulnables.'" "I am ugly; I know it. Say what you please; all the same to me; but don't strike me, that's all I ask." "What have you got in that old handkerchief?" said La Louve. "Yes, yes, what is it? Come, show it!" "Oh! no, I entreat you!" said the poor creature, holding the bundle tightly in her hands. "You must give it up." "Yes, take it from her, La Louve." "What is it?" "Well! it is some clothes (layette) I have commenced for my child. I make them with the old pieces of linen I pick up; it is of no consequence to you, is it?"

"Oh! 'La Layette,' let us see 'La Layette' of Mont Saint Jean!" "Come, come!" "A vous, à vous, La Layette!" cried La Louve, snatching the bundle from the hands of Mont Saint Jean. The wretched handkerchief was torn to pieces in the struggle, and its contents, composed of rags and bits of stuff of all colours, were strewn on the ground and trampled under foot, amid shouts of laughter.

"What rags! What trash! An old rag shop! Takes more thread than stuff!" "Here, pick up your duds, Mont Saint Jean!" "How wicked you are! Mon Dieu, how bad you must be!" cried the poor creature, running here and there after the scraps and rags, which she tried to pick up, notwithstanding the blows they gave her. "I have never harmed any one," said she, weeping; "I have offered, if they would let me alone, to do anything for them they wanted; to give them half of my rations, although I am very hungry. Ah well! no, no, it is just the same. But what must I do for peace? They have not even pity on a

poor woman 'enclente!' They must be more savage than wild beasts! I had so much trouble to collect these little scraps of linen! How do you think I shall make my 'layette,' since I have no money to buy anything?" Suddenly she cried, in an accent of joy, "Oh! since you have come, La Goualeuse, I am saved. Speak to them for me. They will listen to you, surely, since they love you as much as they hate me."

The Goualeuse, arriving the last of the prisoners, then entered the yard.

CHAPTER IX.

LA GOUALEUSE AND LOUISE.

BEFORE we continue the account of this horrible scene—before we cause to appear in this picture the angelic figure of Fleur de Marie—we must return to the Marquise d'Harville and Madame Armand, whose conversation had been for a moment interrupted. At the ringing of the bell, the inspectress had hastened to one of the doors which opened into the court of the prison, to be ready to prevent by her presence, or calm by her authority, any tumult or quarrels that might arise among these *scholars*, whose passions, restrained for some time by discipline and employment, only waited the hour of idleness and recreation to be aroused and excited. Madame Armand had witnessed, in mournful silence, the cruel treatment of which Mont Saint Jean was a victim, and she had already advanced to snatch her from her tormentors when Fleur de Marie appeared.

"She is saved!" said she to herself, and returned to the parlour, where Madame d'Harville awaited her. "But this is quite a romance that you have just related," cried she, without giving Madame Armand time to apologize for her absence. "And this young girl, whose beauty, language, and manners form such a strange contrast to her past degradation, to her present situation, what are her relations with the other prisoners? If she is endowed with the elevation of mind that you suppose, she must suffer much from associating with her miserable companions?" "Mon Dieu! Madame la Marquise, as for me, everything concerning this young girl is a subject of astonishment. Hardly has she been here three days; yet already she possesses a kind of influence over the other prisoners."

"In so short a time?" "They show her not only interest, but almost respect."

"How! these unfortunates—"

"Have sometimes an instinct of singular delicacy in perceiving the noble qualities of others; yet they often hate those whose superiority they are obliged to admit."

"And they do not hate this young girl?"

"Far from that, madame; not one of them knew her before she entered here. They were at first struck with her beauty. Her features, although of rare beauty, are, it is true, veiled with a touching and unhealthy paleness; this melancholy and sweet face inspired them at first with more interest than jealousy. Then she became very quiet: another subject of astonishment for these creatures, who, for the most part, endeavour always to drown the voice of conscience by force of noise and tumult. In fine, although dignified and reserved, she showed herself compassionate, which prevented her companions from being exasperated at her coldness. This

is not all. There is here, since a month, an unruly creature, called La Louve, so violent, audacious, and ferocious is her character; she is a girl of about twenty, tall, masculine, rather a fine face, but very coarse; we are often obliged to put her in confinement to subdue her turbulence. Only the day before yesterday she came out of the cell, very much irritated at the punishment she had just received. It was the hour of repast; the poor girl of whom I have spoken did not eat; she said, sadly, to her companions, 'Who wants my bread?' 'I!' said La Louve, first; 'I!' said a poor deformed creature, afterward, called Mont Saint Jean, who serves as a laughing-stock, and sometimes, in spite of us, as a butt to the other prisoners. The young girl gave her bread to the latter, to the great rage of La Louve. 'It is I who asked you first!' cried she, furiously. 'It is true, but this poor woman is enceinte; she has more need of it than you,' answered the young girl. La Louve, nevertheless, snatched the bread from the hands of Mont Saint Jean, and began to vociferate, brandishing her knife. As she is very irascible, and very much feared, no one dared to take the part of poor Goualeuse."

"How do you call that name, madame?"

"La Goualeuse. It is the name, or, rather, surname, under which she has been confined here. Almost all of them have similar borrowed names."

"It is very singular."

"It signifies, in their hideous language, *the singer*; for this young girl has, they say, a very fine voice; and I readily believe it, for her accent is enchanting." "And how did she escape from this villainous Louve?" "Rendered still more furious by the *sang froid* of La Goualeuse, she ran towards her, with an oath and uplifted knife. All the prisoners screamed with terror. The Goualeuse alone regarded without fear this formidable creature. Smiling bitterly, she said, in her angelic voice, 'Oh! kill me, kill me; I desire it; but do not make me suffer much!' These words, it was reported to me, were pronounced with a simplicity so touching, that almost all the prisoners had tears in their eyes."

"I believe it," said M. d'Harville, painfully affected.

"The worst characters," answered the inspectress, 'happily, have sometimes moments of reflection—a kind of return to the correct path.' On hearing these words, expressed with such resignation, La Louve, touched to the heart, as she afterward said, threw her knife on the ground, trampled it under foot, and cried, 'I was wrong to threaten you, La Goualeuse, for I am stronger than you; you were not afraid of my knife; you are courageous—I love courage; so now, if any one attempts to hurt you, I'll defend you.'" "What a singular character!" The example of La Louve increased the influence of La Goualeuse, and, at present, a thing almost without a precedent, hardly any of the prisoners address her familiarly; the greater part respect her, and even offer to render her any little service that can be rendered among prisoners. I asked some of the prisoners who slept in the same room with her, what was the cause of the deference shown her. 'That's more than we can tell,' they answered: 'it is plain to be seen she is not one of us.' 'But who told you so?' 'No one told us: we see.' 'By what?' 'In a thousand things.' 'For instance, last night, before she went to bed, she went on her knees

and said her prayers; as she prays, as La Louve said, she must have a right to pray!" "What a strange observation!"

"These poor creatures have no sentiment of religion, yet they never utter here a sacrilegious or impious word; you will see, madame, in all our rooms a kind of altar, where the statue of the Virgin is surrounded with offerings and ornaments made by themselves. * * *

"But to return to La Goualeuse: her companions said to me, 'We see that she is not as we are, from her soft manners, her sadness, the way in which she speaks.' And then said La Louve, who was present at this conversation, 'It must be that she is not one of us; for this morning, in our sleeping room, without knowing why, we were ashamed to dress ourselves before her.'"

"What strange delicacy in the midst of so much degradation!" cried M. d'Harville. * * *

"They have, then, a profound sense of their degradation?"

"No one can despise them as much as they despise themselves; among some of them, whose repentance is sincere, this original stain of vice remains indelible in their eyes, even when they find themselves in a better situation; others become insane; so much does the sense of their former aberration remain fixed and implacable. Thus, madame, I should not be surprised if the profound sorrow of the Goualeuse proceeds from some such cause."

"If this should be so, what torture for her! a remorse which nothing can soothe!" "Happily, madame, for the honour of the human race, this remorse occurs oftener than is supposed; avenging conscience never completely sleeps, or, rather, strange thing! sometimes one would say that the spirit watches while the body sleeps; it is an observation that I made only this night again in reference to my protégée. Very often, when the prisoners are asleep, I make the round of the sleeping apartments. You cannot imagine, madame, how much the physiognomies of these women differ in expression while they sleep. A great number of them whom I had seen during the day careless, bold, brazen, impudent, seemed completely to have changed when sleep had deprived their features of all the audacity of wickedness; for vice, alas! has its pride. Oh! madame, what sorrowful revelations on these countenances, then dejected, melancholy and sad! what involuntary starts! what mournful sighs torn from them by a dream, doubtless impressed with an inexorable reality! I spoke to you just now, madame, of this girl called La Louve. About fifteen days ago she insulted me brutally before all the prisoners; I shrugged my shoulders; my indifference but exasperated her; then she thought to wound me by uttering something disgraceful concerning my mother, who she had often seen here on a visit to me. Ah, how horrid! I acknowledge, stupid as this attack was, she hurt me. La Louve saw it, and triumphed. That night I went to make an inspection in the sleeping apartment; I reached the bed of La Louve, who was to be put in the cell next morning; I was struck with the sweetness of her face, compared with the hard and insolent expression which was habitual to her; her features seemed supplicating, full of sadness and contrition; her lips were half open, her breathing oppressed; finally, a thing which appeared to me incredible, for I thought it impossible, two tears—two large tears fell from the eyes of this woman. I looked at her in silence for some moments, when I heard

her pronounce these words, '*Pardon pardon! her mother*.' I listened more attentively, but all that I could hear was my name, Madame Armand, pronounced with a sigh." "She repented, during her sleep, of having abused your mother?" "I thought so—and it made me less severe."

"And the next day, did she express any regret for her past conduct?"

"None; she showed herself just the same as always."

"But, madame, you must need great courage, much strength of mind, not to recoil before the unpleasantness of a task which brings such rare returns!" "The consciousness of fulfilling a duty sustains and encourages me; besides, sometimes, one is recompensed by some happy discovery."

"No matter; women like you, madame, are seldom to be found."

"No, no; I assure you that which I do others do, and with more success and intelligence than me. One of the inspectresses of the other quarter of Saint Lazare, destined for those accused of other crimes, will interest you much more. She related to me the arrival, this morning, of a young girl, accused of infanticide. Never have I heard anything more touching. The father of the poor unfortunate is become insane from grief, on learning the shame of his child. It appears that nothing could be more frightful than the poverty of this family, who lived in a wretched garret in the Rue du Temple." "The Rue du Temple!" cried Madame d'Harville, astonished. "What is the name of the family?"

"Morel. Her name is Louise Morel."

"This poor family has been recommended to me," said Clémence, blushing, "but I was far from expecting to hear such terrible news—and Louise Morel—" "Says she is innocent; she swears her child was dead; and her words have the accent of truth." "Since you have interested yourself in her family, Madame la Marquise, if you would have the kindness to see her, this mark of your goodness would calm her despair, which they say is fearful." "Certainly, I will see her, and the Goualeuse also; for all you tell me about this poor girl affects me sincerely. But what must I do to obtain her liberty? Then I will find her a place; I will take charge of her." "With the relations you have, Madame la Marquise, it will be very easy for you to get her discharge to-day or to-morrow; this depends entirely on the prefect of the police. The recommendation of a person of consideration would be decisive with him. But I have wandered far, madame, from the observation that I made on the slumber of the Goualeuse. And on this subject, I must confess that I should not be astonished that, to the sentiments of profound grief for her first fault, is joined another sorrow, not less cruel."

"What do you mean to say, madame?"

"Perhaps I am deceived; but I should not be astonished that this young girl, emancipated, as it were, from the degradation into which she was first plunged, had experienced, perhaps, a virtuous love, which was at once her happiness and her misery."

"And for what reasons do you think so?"

"The obstinate silence she keeps as to the place where she passed the three months which followed her departure from the cité, makes me think that she fears to be reclaimed by the persons with whom, perhaps, she found a refuge." "And why this fear?"

"Because she would then have to avow a past life, of which they are, doubtless, ignorant."

"Really, this peasant's dress—"

"Besides, another circumstance has strengthened my suspicions. Last night, as I made my inspections, I drew near the bed of the Goualeuse; she slept profoundly; her face was calm and serene; her thick flaxen hair, half escaping from under her cap, fell in profusion on her neck and shoulders. She had her small hands clasped, and crossed on her bosom, as if she had fallen asleep while in the act of prayer. I contemplated with compassion this angelic countenance, when, in a low voice, and in a tone at once respectful, sorrowful, and endearing, she pronounced a name." "And this name?" "After a moment's silence, Madame Armand said gravely, "Although I consider as sacred that which one hears another express in their sleep, you interest yourself so generously in this unfortunate, madame, that I can confide to you this secret. This name was *Rodolphe*." "Rodolphe!" cried Madame d'Harville, thinking of the prince. Then, reflecting that, after all, the Grande duke of Gerolstein could have no connexion with the Rodolphe of the poor Goualeuse, she said to the inspectress, who seemed astonished at her exclamation, "This name surprised me, madame, for, by a singular chance, one of my relations has it also; but all that you have told me of the Goualeuse interests me more and more. Can I not see her to-day? Now?" "Yes, madame, I will go, if you wish it, to find her. I can also ask about Louise Morel, who is in the other part of the prison." "I shall be much obliged," answered Madame d'Harville, and she remained alone.

"It is singular," said she; "I cannot account for the strange impression which the name of Rodolphe caused me. Truly, I am mad! between him and such a creature, what relations can exist?" Then, after a pause, the marquise added, "He was right! how much all this interests me! the mind, the heart, expands when they are applied to such noble occupations! Thus, as he says, it seems as if one participated in the power of Providence, when relieving those who are deserving. And, then, these excursions in a world of the existence of which we have no suspicion are so interesting, so *amusing*, as he was pleased to say! What romance could give me such touching emotions, excite to this point my curiosity! This poor Goualeuse, for example, inspires me with profound pity; and this other unfortunate, the daughter of the artisan, whom the prince had so generously relieved in my name! Poor people! their frightful misery served as a pretext to save me. I have escaped shame, death, perhaps, by a hypocritical falsehood; this deceit oppresses me; but I will expiate it by force of benefactions. This will be easy! it is so sweet to follow the noble counsels of Rodolphe! it is more to love than to obey him! Oh! I feel it—I know it. I experience a sweet delight in acting through him; for I love him. Oh! yes, I love him! and he will be forever ignorant of this eternal passion of my life." While Madame d'Harville awaits the Goualeuse, we will return to the prison-yard.

CHAPTER X.

LA LOUVE AND LA GOUALEUSE.

FLEUR DE MARIE wore the blue dress and black cap of the prisoners; but even in this com-

mon costume, she was still charming. Yet since she was carried off from the farm of Bouqueval, her features were much altered; her natural paleness, slightly tinted with rose, was now as dead as the whitest of alabaster; her expression had also changed; it had now assumed a kind of dignified sadness. Fleur de Marie knew that to endure courageously the grievous sacrifices of expiation is almost to obtain a kind of regeneration. "Ask them, then, pardon for me, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean. "See how they drag in the dirt all that I had collected with so much trouble to commence the layette of my child; what good can it do them?" Fleur de Marie did not say a word, but she began actively to collect, one by one, from under the feet of the prisoners, all the rags she could find. One of the prisoners retaining mischievously under her foot a kind of waistcoat made of coarse muslin, Fleur de Marie, always stooping, raised her enchanting face towards this woman, and said, in her sweet voice,

"I beg you, let me, take this, in the name of the poor weeping woman." The prisoner withdrew her foot. The waistcoat was saved, as well as all the other rags, which the Goualeuse secured piece by piece. There remained only one little cap, which two of them were contending for, laughing. Fleur de Marie said to them, "Come, be good now, and give her this little cap."

"Ah! well, yes; it is for a baby harlequin, this cap! it is made of a piece of gray stuff, with peaks of green and black fustian, and a bedtick lining." This description of the cap was received with shouts of laughter. "Laugh at it as much as you please, but give it to me," said Mont Saint Jean; "but don't drag it in the gutter as you did the rest." "I beg your pardon, La Goualeuse, for having made you soil your hands for me," added she, in a grateful voice. "Give me the harlequin cap!" said La Louve, who caught it, and shook it in the air as a trophy. "I entreat you to give it to me," said La Goualeuse. "No! because you will give it to Mont Saint Jean." "Certainly." "Ah! bah! it is not worth the trouble, such a rag!"

"It is because Mont Saint Jean has nothing but rags to dress her child with, that you should have pity on her, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, sadly, extending her hand towards the cap. "You shan't have it!" answered La Louve, brutally; "must one always give up to you—to you, because you are the weakest? You take advantage of this!"

"Where would be the merit of giving it to me if I were the strongest?" answered La Goualeuse, with a smile full of grace. "No, no, you wish to twist me about again with your little soft voice; you shan't have it!" "Come, now, La Louve, don't be naughty." "Leave me alone, you tire me." "I entreat you!" "Stop! don't make me angry—I have said no, and no it is!" cried La Louve, very much irritated.

"Have pity upon her; see how she weeps!" "What is that to me? so much the worse for her! she is our *souffre-douleur*." "That's true, that's true, don't give it up," murmured several of the prisoners, carried away by the example of La Louve. "You are right—so much the worse for her!" said Fleur de Marie, with bitterness; "she is your *souffre-douleur*, but she ought to be resigned to it; her groans amuse you, her tears make you laugh; you must pass the time in some way! if you should kill her on the spot,

she has no right to say anything. You are right, La Louve—it is just! this poor woman has done no harm; she cannot defend herself; she is one against the whole—you overpower her—that is very brave and very generous." "We are cowards, then!" cried La Louve, carried away by the violence of her character, and by her impatience of all contradiction; "will you answer? are we cowards, hey?" said she, more and more irritated. Murmurs, very threatening for the Goualeuse, began to be heard. The offended prisoners approached and surrounded her, vociferating, forgetting or revolting against the ascendancy that the young girl had until then obtained over them. "She calls us cowards! By what right does she scold us? Is it because she is greater than we are? We have been too good to her, and now she wants to take *airs* with us. If we choose to torment Mont Saint Jean, what has she got to say about it? Since it is so, you shall be worse beaten than before, do you hear, Mont Saint Jean?" "Hold, here is one to begin with," said one of them, giving her a blow. "And if you meddle with what don't concern you, La Goualeuse, we'll treat you in the same way." "Yes, yes!" "This isn't all!" cried La Louve; "La Goualeuse must ask our pardon for having called us cowards! If not, and we let her go on, she'll finish by eating us with the wool on our backs; we are very stupid not to have seen that! She must ask our pardon! On her knee! on both knees! or we'll treat her like Mont Saint Jean, her protégée. On your knees—on your knees! Oh! we are cowards! Repeat it then, hei!" Fleur de Marie was not alarmed at these furious cries; she let the storm rage, and then as soon as she could be heard, casting a calm and melancholy glance around her, she replied to La Louve, who vociferated anew, "Dare to repeat, then, that we are cowards!"

"You? no, no; it is this poor woman whose clothes you have torn, whom you have beaten, dragged in the mire; it is she who is a coward! Do you not see how she weeps, how she trembles in looking at you! once more, it is she who is a coward, since she is afraid of you."

The discernment of Fleur de Marie served her perfectly. She might have invoked justice, and duty, to disarm the stupid and brutal conduct of the prisoners, they would not have listened to her; but in addressing them with this sentiment of natural generosity, which is never extinct even in the most contemptible natures, she awoke a feeling of pity.

La Louve and her companions still murmured; Fleur de Marie continued: "Your *souffre-douleur* does not deserve compassion, you say; but, mon Dieu! her child deserves it. Alas! does it not feel the blows given to the mother? When she cries for mercy; it is not for her, it is for her child! When she asks for some of your bread, if you have too much, because she has more hunger than usual, it is not for her, it is for her child! When she begs you, with tears in her eyes, to spare these rags, which she has had so much trouble to collect, it is not for her, it is for her child! This poor little cap, which you have made so much fun of, is laughable, perhaps; yet, to me, only to look at it, makes me feel like weeping. I avow it. Laugh at us both, Mont Saint Jean and me, if you will." The prisoners did not laugh. La Louve even looked sadly at the little cap she held in her hand. "Mon Dieu!" continued Fleur de Marie, wiping

her eyes with the back of her white and delicate hand; "I know you are not cruel. You torment Mont Saint Jean from want of employment, not from cruelty. But you forget that they are two, she and the child. Should she hold it in her arms that it should protect her from you, not only you would not strike her, for fear of hurting the poor innocent, but if it was cold you would give to its mother all you could to cover it, is it not so, La Louve?"

"It is true; a child, who would not pity it?"

"It is very plain, that." "If it was hungry you would take the bread out of your own mouth; would you not, La Louve?"

"Yes, and willingly. I am no worse than others." "Nor we, neither." "A poor little innocent!" "Who would have a heart to hurt it?" "Must be a monster!" "No hearts!" "Wild beasts!"

"I told you truly," said Fleur de Marie, "that you were not cruel. You are kind; your error is not to reflect that Mont Saint Jean, instead of having her child in her arms to excite your compassion, has it in her bosom—that's all."

"That's all!" cried La Louve, with warmth: "no; that's not all. You were right, La Goualeuse; we were cowards, and you were brave in daring to tell us so; and you are brave in not trembling after having told us. Do you see, we have well said and done to constantly insist that *you are not one of us*—it must always come to this. It vexes me; but so it is. We were all wrong just now. You were more courageous than we were."

"That's true; this little blonde must have had courage, to tell us the truth right in our faces."

"Oh! but it is that these blue eyes—so soft! so soft! when once you look at them." "After all, it is true: when we strike Mont Saint Jean, we strike her child." "I didn't think of that." "Nor I neither."

"But La Goualeuse, she thinks of everything."

"And to strike a child is shameful!" "There isn't one of us capable of doing it."

Nothing is more easily moved than popular passions—nothing more blunt, more rapid, than the return from evil to good and from good to evil. Some simple and touching words of Fleur de Marie had caused a sudden reaction in favour of Mont Saint Jean, who wept gently.

Suddenly, La Louve, violent and hasty in everything, took the little cap she held in her hand, made a kind of purse of it, fumbled in her pocket, drew out twenty sous, threw them into the cap, and cried, in presenting it to her companions, "I give twenty sous towards buying a 'layette' for Mont Saint Jean. We'll cut it all out and sew it ourselves, so that the making up shan't cost one sous."

"Yes, yes." "That's it! let us club together."

"I'm agreed!" "Famous idea!" "Poor woman!" "She is as ugly as a monster; but she is a mother, like any one else." "I give ten sous." "I thirty." "I twenty." "I four sous; got no more." "I have nothing; but I will sell my ration for to-morrow—who'll buy?" "I," said La Louve; "I put ten sous for you; but you'll keep your ration, and Mont Saint Jean shall have a 'layette' like a princess."

To express the surprise, the joy of Mont Saint Jean, would be impossible: her grotesque and ugly visage became almost touching. Happiness and gratitude beamed there.

Fleur de Marie was also very happy, although she had been obliged to say to La Louve, when

she held the little cap towards her, "I have no money; but I will work as much as you wish."

"Oh! my good little angel from Paradise," cried Mont Saint Jean, falling at the feet of La Goualeuse, and trying to take her hand to kiss it, "what is it I have done that you should be so charitable towards me, and all these *ladies* also? Is it possible, my good angel? A layette for my child—a good layette—everything that I want! Who could have believed it? I shall become crazy, I am sure. I, who was just now the scapegoat of every one! In a moment, because you said something in your dear little voice of a *sérâph*, you turn them from evil to good; and now they love me, and I love them. They are so good! I was wrong to get angry. Wasn't I a fool, and unjust, and ungrateful? All that they have done to me was only for a laugh: they didn't wish me any harm—it was for my good; and here is the proof. Oh! now if they were to kill me on the spot, I would not say a word."

"We have eighty-eight francs and seven sous," said La Louve, having finished counting the money she had collected. "Who will be treasurer? Mustn't give it to Mont Saint Jean; she is too stupid."

"Let the Goualeuse take charge of the money," they all cried unanimously.

"If you yield to me," said Fleur de Marie, "you will beg Madame Armand, the inspectress, to take charge of this sum, and make the necessary purchases for the 'layette,' and, then, who knows? Madame Armand will know the good action you have done, and, perhaps, she will ask to have your time reduced. Ah, well, La Louve," added she, taking her companion by the arm, "don't you now feel happier than when you were casting to the winds, just now, the poor rags of, Mont Saint Jean?"

La Louve at first did not answer. To the generous warmth which had for a moment animated her features had succeeded a kind of savage defiance.

Fleur de Marie looked at her with surprise, not understanding this sudden change.

"La Goualeuse, come; I want to speak to you," said La Louve, in a sullen manner; and, leaving the other prisoners, she led Fleur de Marie near to the basin which was in the centre of the court. La Louve and her companion seated themselves, isolated, as it were, from the rest of their companions.

The reconciliation of these two young girls, their appearance, offered a singular contrast. A winter's sun shed its pale rays upon them, the blue sky was partially obscured by white and fleecy clouds; some birds, deceived by the mildness of the atmosphere, were warbling in the black branches of the large chestnut-trees in the court; two or three sparrows, bolder than the rest, came to drink and to bathe in a little brook which flowed from the fountain; the stone margin was covered with green moss, and here and there from the interstices raised their head some tufts of green herbs, which the frost had spared. This description of the prison basin may seem trifling, but Fleur de Marie lost not one of these details; with her eyes fixed sadly on the clouds as they broke the azure of the sky, or reflected the golden rays of the sun, she thought, with a sigh, of the magnificence of nature, which she so much loved, which she admired so poetically, and of which she was again deprived.

"What do you wish to say to me?" asked La Goualeuse of her companion, who, seated alongside of her, remained sombre and silent. "It is necessary that we have an explanation," cried La Louve, harshly: "this cannot last so."

"I do not understand you, La Louve." "Just now, in the court, I had said to myself, I will not yield to La Goualeuse, and yet I have again given way to you." "But," "But I tell you, this cannot last so." "What have you against me, La Louve?" "I have—that I am no longer the same since your arrival; no, I have no longer any courage, strength, nor hardihood."

Then, interrupting herself, she pushed up the sleeve of her dress, and showed to La Goualeuse her strong white arm, and pointed out to her, printed with indelible ink, a poniard half plunged in a red heart; over this emblem were these words:

Mort aux lâches!
Martial
P. L. V. (pour la vie).

"Do you see that?" cried La Louve. "Yes; it makes me afraid," said La Goualeuse, turning away her head.

"When Martial, my lover, wrote this with a red-hot needle, *Mort aux lâches!* he thought me brave; if he knew my conduct for three days past, he would plant his knife in my body as this poniard is planted in this heart; and he would be right, for he has written there, *Mort aux lâches* (death to the coward)! and I am a *lâche*!" "What have you done that is *lâche*?" "Everything." "Do you regret what you have done just now?" "Yes!" "Ah! I do not believe you." "I tell you that I regret it, for it is another proof of the power you have over us all. Did you not hear what Mont Saint Jean said when she was on her knees to thank you?" "What did she say?" "She said, in speaking of us, that with nothing you turn us from evil to good. I could have strangled her when she said that, for, to our shame, it is true. Yes, in a moment, you change us from white to black: we listen to you, we give way to our first feelings, and we are your dupes." "My dupe—because you have generously assisted this poor woman!" "It shall not be said," cried La Louve, "that a little girl like you shall trample me under foot." "I! and how?" "Do I know how? You come here—you commence, at first by offending me." "Offend you?" "Yes: you ask who wants your bread; I answer the first, 'I!' Mont Saint Jean only asks for it afterward, and you give her the preference. Furious at this, I rush on you with my knife raised." "And I said to you, 'Kill me if you will, but do not make me suffer too much,'" answered La Goualeuse: "that was all."

"That was all! Yes, that was all! and yet, these words alone caused the knife to fall from my hands; made me ask your pardon—from you, who had offended me. Is it natural? Hold! when I return to my senses, I pity myself. And, the night when you arrived here, when you knelt to say your prayers, why, instead of laughing at you, and arousing the whole company—why is it that I said to myself, 'Leave her alone; she prays because she has the right to do so.' And, the next morning, why were we all ashamed to dress before you?"

"I do not know, La Louve." "Really!" said this violent creature, with irony, "you don't know! It is, doubtless, as we have told you

sometimes in jest, that you are of another species from us. Perhaps you believe that?" "I never said so." "You never said so, but you act so." "I pray you to listen to me."

"No! it has been of no service for me to listen to you—to look at you. Until now I have never envied any one. Well, two or three times I have surprised myself in envying—can anything be more *lâche*—in envying your face—like the Holy Virgin's! your soft and sad manner! Yes, I have envied even your fair hair, and your blue eyes. I, who have always detested the blondes, since I am a brunette—to wish to resemble you!" "I? La Louve! I?" "Eight days ago I should have left my mark on any one who would have dared to tell me this. However, I do not envy you your lot; you are as sad as a Magdalen. Is it natural? speak!" "How can you expect me to account to you for the impressions I cause?" "Oh, you know well enough what you do, with your touch-me-not air." "But what design can I have?" "Do you think I know? It is exactly that I cannot understand all this that I suspect you. There is another thing: until now I have always been gay or angry—but never a thinker; and you have made me think. Yes, there are some words you say which, in spite of me, have touched my heart and make me think all manner of sad things." "I am sorry to have made you sad, La Louve; but I do not remember to have said any—" "Eh! mon Dieu!" cried La Louve, "what you do is often as touching as what you say! You are so malignant!"

"Do not be angry, La Louve! explain yourself."

"Yesterday, in the workshop, I saw you well. You had your eyes and head down, fixed on your work; a large tear fell on your hand; you looked at it for a moment, and then you carried your hand to your lips, as if to kiss away this tear; is it not true?"

"It is true," said La Goualeuse, blushing.

"That has the appearance of nothing! But, at that moment you looked so unhappy—so unhappy, that I felt myself all heartache—every feeling stirred up. Say now? do you think this is amusing? How! I have always been as hard as a rock about everything concerning myself. No one can boast of ever having seen me weep; and it must be that in looking at your little face I should feel cowardice at my heart! Yes, for all that is pure cowardice; and the proof is, that for three days I have not dared to write to Martial, my conscience accuses me so much. Yes, keeping company with you has weakened my character; it must stop; I have enough of it; I wish to remain as I am, and not have them to laugh at me."

"And why should they laugh at you?" "Pardieu! because they would see me acting a stupid, good-natured part—I, who made them all tremble here! No, no; I am twenty; I am as handsome as you, in my way; I am wicked; I am feared, and that's what I want. I laugh at the rest. Perish! who says the contrary?" "You are angry with me, La Louve?" "Yes, you are for me a bad acquaintance; if this is continued, in fifteen days, instead of being called La Louve (the wolf), they will call me the Brebis (sheep). Thank you! it's not me they'll baptize so. Martial would kill me. In fine, I want none of your company; I am going to ask to be put in another hall; if they refuse, I'll do something so that they will put me in the dungeon until my time

is up. That's what I have to say to you, La Goualeuse." *

"I assure you, La Louve, said Fleur de Marie, "that you feel an interest in me, not because you are 'lâche,' but because you are generous—brave hearts alone feel the misfortunes of others." "There is neither generosity nor courage in this," said La Louve, brutally; "it is cowardice. Besides, I do not wish you to tell me that I am touched—softened; it is not true." "I will not say so any more, La Louve; but since you have shown some interest for me, you will let me be grateful to you for it, will you not?" "To-night I shall be in another hall from you, or alone in the dungeon; and soon I shall be away from here, Dieu merci!" "And where will you go then?" "I shall go to my own home, Rue Pierre Lescot. I have my own furnished rooms."

"And Martial?" said La Goualeuse, who hoped to continue the conversation by speaking of an object interesting to her; "and Martial! you'll be very happy to see him?" "Yes; oh, yes!" answered she: "when I was arrested he was recovering from sickness—a fever which he had, because he is always on the water. For sixteen or seventeen nights I never left him for a moment. I sold half that I possessed to pay for a physician and medicines. I can boast of it; and I do boast of it. If my man lives, he owes it to me. I yesterday burned a candle before the Virgin for him. It is foolish; but never mind, some very good effects have proceeded from this for a convalescent."

"And where is he now? what does he do?" "He lives near the bridge of Asnières, on the shore." "On the shore?" "Yes, he is established there with his family, in a solitary house. He is always warring with the 'gardes-pêche,' and when once he is in his boat, with his double-barrelled gun, it's no good to approach him, allez!" said La Louve, proudly. "What is his trade?" "He fishes by stealth at night; his father had some *misunderstanding* with justice. He has still a mother, two sisters, and a brother. So much the better it would be for him not to have such a brother, for he is a scoundrel, who will be guillotined one of these days; his sisters also. However, never mind, their necks belong to themselves." "And where did you first know Martial?" "In Paris. He wished to learn the trade of a locksmith; a fine trade, always red hot iron and fire around one, and danger, too! that suited him, but, like me, he had a bad head—couldn't agree with the bourgeois; so he returned to his family, and began to maraud on the river. He came to Paris to see me, and I went to see him at Asnières; it is very near; but if it had been farther, I should have gone, even if I had been obliged to go on my hands and knees."

"You will be very happy to go to the country, you, La Louve!" said the Goualeuse, sighing; "above all, if you love, as I do, to walk in the fields." "I prefer to walk in the woods—in the large forests, with Martial." "In forests? are you not afraid?" "Afraid! ah, yes—afraid! Is a wolf afraid? The thicker and darker the forest, the more I like it. A lonely hut, where I should live with Martial, who should be a poacher; to go with him at night, make traps for the game; and then, if the guards come to arrest us, to fire on them, hiding ourselves in the bushes—ah! dame, that's what I would like!" "You have, then, lived in a forest, La Louve?"

"Never." "Who gave you such ideas?" "Martial." "How?" "He was a poacher in the forest of Rambouillet. About a year ago he was *looked upon* as having fired upon a guard who had fired upon him; villain of a guard! it was not proved in court, but Martial was obliged to leave. So he then came to Paris to learn a trade; as I said, he left and went to maraud on the river; it is less slavish. But he always regrets the woods, and will return there some day or other." *

"And your parents, La Louve, where are they?" "Do you think I know!" "Is it a long time since you have seen them?"

"I do not know if they are dead or alive."

Fleur de Marie, although plunged very young into an atmosphere of corruption, had since respired an air so pure, that she experienced a painful oppression at the horrid story of La Louve.

CHAPTER ~~XXX~~ VI

CASTLES IN THE AIR.

LA GOUALEUSE, suppressing the emotion which the sad confession of her companion had caused her, said to her, timidly,

"Listen to me without being angry." "Come, say on; I hope I have talked enough; but, in truth, all the same, since it is the last time we shall converse together." "Are you happy, La Louve?" "How?" "With the life you lead?" "Here at Saint Legare?" "No; at your home, when you are free."

"Yes, I am happy." "Always?" "Always." "You would not change your lot for any other?"

"For what other? There's no other lot for me."

"Tell me, La Louve," continued Fleur de Marie, after a moment's silence, "do you not sometimes like to build castles in the air here in prison? It is so amusing."

"Respecting what—castles in the air?" "About Martial?" "Martial!" "Yes." "Ma foi, I never have." "Let me build one for you and Martial." "Bah! for what good?" "To pass the time." "Well, let us see this castle." "Just imagine, for example, that by chance you should meet some one who should say to you, 'Abandoned by your father and mother, your childhood has been surrounded by bad examples; that you must be pitied as much as blamed for having become—'" "Having become what?" "What you and I—have become," answered the Goualeuse, in a soft voice. "Suppose this person were to say to you, 'You love Martial—he loves you; leave your present mode of life, and become his wife.'" La Louve shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you think he would take me for his wife?"

"Except his poaching, has he ever committed any other culpable action?" "No; he is a poacher on the river, as he was in the woods; and he is right. Hold; are not the fish like the game, belonging to him who can take them? Where, then, is the mark of their owner?" "Well, suppose, having renounced this, he wishes to become an honest man; suppose that he inspires, by the frankness of his good resolu-

tions, enough confidence in an unknown benefactor, so that he would give him a place—now, see, this is always a castle—give him a place as gamekeeper, for example. To him who was a poacher, it would be to his liking, I hope. It is the same trade, only lawful.”

“Ma foi, yes; it is always living in the woods.”

“Only this place would be given to him on the sole condition that he would marry you and take you with him.”

“I go with Martial?” “Yes; you would be so happy, you say, to live together in a forest. Would you not like better, instead of a miserable poacher’s hat, where you would hide yourselves like criminals, to have a nice little cottage, of which you should be the active and industrious housekeeper?”

“You make fun of me. Can this be possible?”

“Who knows? Chance? Besides, it is always a castle.” “Ah! true; very well.” “I say, La Louve, it seems to me I already see you established in your cottage in the forest, with your husband, and two or three children. What happiness! is it not?” “Children! Martial!” cried La Louve; “oh, yes, they would be *profoundly* loved!”

“How much company they would be for you in your solitude! Then, when they began to grow up, they could render you some assistance: the smallest could pick up the dead branches for your fire; the largest could lead the cow to pasture—the cow which has been given to your husband for his activity; for, having been a poacher himself, he would make all the better gamekeeper.”

“Just so; that’s true. Ah, it is amusing, these castles in the air. Tell me some more, La Goualeuse.”

“They will be very much pleased with your husband. You will receive from his master some presents. A nice courtyard—a garden. But, marry! you will have to work, La Louve, and that from morning to night.” “Oh, if that was all, once along with Martial, work wouldn’t make me afraid. I have strong arms.”

“And you would have enough to occupy them, I answer for it. There is so much to do. There are the meals to prepare, clothes to mend; one day the washing, another day baking, or the house to clean from top to bottom; so that the other gamekeepers would say, ‘Oh, there is not a housekeeper like Martial’s wife; from the cellar to the garret, her house is as nice as wax; and the children always so neat and clean! It is because she is so industrious, Madame Martial.’” “Tell me, La Goualeuse, is it true I shall be called Madame Martial?” “It is a great deal better than to be called La Louve, is it not?” “Certainly; I prefer the name of any man to the name of a beast. But, bah! bah! *louve* I am born, and *louve* I shall die.” “Who knows? who knows? do not recoil from a hard life, but an honest one, that brings happiness. Thus, work would not alarm you.” “Oh, as to that, no.” “And then, besides, it is not all labour; there are moments of repose. In the winter evenings, while your children are asleep, and your husband smoking his pipe, cleaning his gun, or caressing his dogs, listen, now, you can have a nice little quiet time.”

“Bah! bah! a quiet time; sit with my arms folded. Ma foi, no; I would prefer to mend

the linen of the family, in the evening, at the corner of the fire; that is not so tiresome. The days are so short in winter.” At the words of Fleur de Marie, La Louve forgot more and more the present for these dreams of the future, as vividly interested as Goualeuse had been before when Rodolphe had spoken to her of the rustic enjoyments at the farm of De Bouqueval. La Louve did not conceal the wild tastes with which her lover had inspired her. Remembering the profound and salutary impression that she had received from the smiling description of a country life by Rodolphe, Fleur de Marie wished to try the same mode of action on La Louve, thinking, with reason, that if her companion would suffer herself to be sufficiently moved at this picture of a rough, poor, and solitary life, to ardently desire to live such a one, this woman would deserve interest and pity.

Enchanted at seeing her companion listen with curiosity, La Goualeuse continued, smiling, “And then, do you see, *Madame Martial*—let me call you so; what do you care?” “On the contrary, that flatters me,” said La Louve, shrugging her shoulders, and smiling also. “What folly—to play *Madame*! What children we are! Never mind, go on—it is amusing. You said, then—” “I say, *Madame Martial*, that in speaking of your mode of living in winter, in the woods, we only think of the worst part of the season.” “Ma foi, no; that is not the worst. To hear the wind whistle at night in the forest, and from time to time the wolves howl, far off—far off; I do not find this tiresome, not I, if I am alongside of a good fire, with my man and my brats; or even all alone with my children, while he is gone to make his rounds. Oh! a gun doesn’t frighten me. If I had my children to defend, I’d be good then. Allez! La Louve would take good care of her whelps!” “Oh! I believe you—you are very brave; but I, coward, I prefer spring to winter. Oh! the spring, *Madame Martial*, the spring! when the leaves burst forth; when the pretty wood-flowers blossom, which smell so good—so good, that the air is perfumed. Then it is that your children will tumble gayly on the new grass, and the forest will become so thick and bushy, that your house can hardly be seen for the foliage; I think I can see it from here. There is a bower before the door that your husband has planted, and which shades the seat of turf where he sleeps during the heat of the day, while you go and come, and tell the children not to wake their father. I do not know if you have remarked it, but at noon, in the middle of summer, it is as silent in the woods as during the night. Not a leaf stirs, nor is a bird heard to sing.”

“That is true,” repeated La Louve mechanically, who, forgetting more and more the reality, believed almost that she saw displayed before her eyes the smiling pictures described by the poetic imagination of Fleur de Marie—of Fleur de Marie, so instinctively a lover of the beauties of nature. Delighted with the profound attention which her companion lent her, she continued, allowing herself to be carried away by the charm of the thoughts she evoked: “There is one thing that I like almost as well as the silence of the woods—it is the noise of the large drops of rain in the summer, falling on the leaves: do you like this also?” “Oh yes! I like also, very much, the summer rain.” “Is it not so? when the trees, the moss, the grass—all is well moistened, what a fine fresh odour? And then, now—

the sun peeping through the trees, makes all these drops of water sparkle which hang from the leaves after the shower! Have you remarked this also?" "Yes, but I don't remember it now, because you tell it to me. How droll it is! you tell it so well, La Goualeuse, that one seems to see everything, everything as you speak; and then, dame! I do not know how to explain this to you; but, look here what you have said—smells good—it is refreshing—like the summer rain, of which you spoke." Thus, like the beautiful, the good, poetry is often contagious. La Louve, this brutal and savage nature, had to submit in everything to the influence of Fleur de Marie. She added, smiling, "We must not believe that we are alone in loving the summer rain." "And the birds there?—how happy they are! how they shake their wings in warbling joyously—not more joyously, however, than your children—your children, free, gay, and lively as they are: see now, at the close of day, the youngest running through the woods to meet their brother, who brings the two heifers from the pasture; they soon heard the tinkling of their bells, *allez!*"

"Say, now, La Goualeuse, it seems to me that I can see the smallest and the boldest, who has caused himself to be placed by his brother, who sustains him, astraddle the back of one of the cows."

"And one would say that the poor beast knew what burden she was bearing, she walks with so much precaution." "But now it is the hour for supper; your eldest, while the cattle were grazing, has amused himself in filling a basket for you with wild strawberries, which he has brought covered with violets."

"Strawberries and violets—oh; that must be a balm! But, *mon Dieu!* *mon Dieu!* where the devil do you go, then, to get such ideas, La Goualeuse?" "In the woods, where the strawberries ripen, where the violets bloom; it is only to look and collect, Madame Martial. But let us speak of the house keeping: now it is night, you must milk your cows, prepare the supper under the arbour, for you hear now your husband's dogs bark, and soon the voice of their master, who, tired as he is, comes home singing. And why should he not sing, when, on a fine summer evening, with a contented mind, he regains his house, where a good wife and fine children await him? is it not so, Madame Martial?" "True, one could not do otherwise than to sing," said La Louve, becoming more and more thoughtful. "At least, if one does not weep from joy," continued Fleur de Marie, herself affected. "And such tears are as sweet as songs. And then, when night has closed in, what happiness to remain under the arbour, to enjoy the serenity of a fine evening; to breathe the perfume of the forest; to hear the children prattle; to look at the stars! Then the heart is so full—so full, that it must be relieved by prayer. How! not to thank Him to whom one owes the freshness of the night, the perfume of the woods, the sweet light of the starry heavens? After these thanks, or this prayer, you go to sleep peacefully until the morning, and then again you thank the Creator; for this poor, industrious, but calm and honest life, is that of every day." "Of every day!" repeated La Louve, her head on her bosom, her eyes fixed, her breathing oppressed; "for it is true, the bon Dieu is good to give us the power to live happy on so little." "Well, now say," continued Fleur

de Marie, gently, "say, ought he not be blessed and thanked like the bon Dieu, who would give you this peaceful and industrious life, instead of the miserable one you lead in the mud in the streets of Paris?"

This word Paris called La Louve to the reality.

A strange phenomenon had just been occurring in the mind, the soul of this creature. A natural picture of an humble and rude condition, this simple recital, now lighted up by the soft glimmerings of a domestic fireside, gilded by some joyous rays of the sun, refreshed by the gentle winds of the forest, or perfumed by the odour of wild flowers—this recital had made on La Louve an impression more profound, more striking, than all the exhortations of a transcendent morality could have effected. Yes, as Fleur de Marie spoke, La Louve had desired to be an indefatigable housekeeper, an honest wife, a pious and devoted mother. To inspire, even for a moment, a violent, immoral, degraded woman, with a love of family, the respect of duty, the desire to labour, gratitude towards the Creator, and that only by promising her that which God gives to all, the sun of the heavens, and the shade of the forests, that which man owes to the sweat of his brow, bread and shelter, was it not a triumph for Fleur de Marie? The moralist the most severe, the preacher the most fulminating, would they have obtained more by their menacing threats of every vengeance, human and Divine?

The angry feelings showed by La Louve when she awoke from her dream to the reality, showed the effects or influence of the words of her companion. The more her regrets were bitter on awakening to the sense of her horrible position, the more the triumph of the Goualeuse was manifest.

After a moment of silence and reflection, La Louve suddenly raised her head, passed her hand over her face, and arose from her seat threatening and angry.

"Do you see, do you see that I had reason to avoid you, and not listen to you, because it only does me harm? Why have you talked in this way to me? to laugh at me? to torment me? And this because I was fool enough to tell you that I would like to live in a forest with Martial? But, who are you, then? Why do you turn my head in this way? You do not know what you have done, unlucky girl! Now, in spite of myself, I shall always be thinking of this wood, this house, these children, all this happiness, which I never shall have—never—never! And if I cannot forget what you have told me, my life will be a torment, a hell; and this, by your fault—yes, by your fault!"

"So much the better! oh! so much the better!" said Fleur de Marie. "You say so?" cried La Louve, with threatening eyes. "Yes, so much the better; for if your miserable mode of living from henceforth proves a hell, you will prefer that of which I have spoken."

"And what good to me to prefer it, since I cannot enjoy it? why regret being a girl of the streets, since I must die one?" cried La Louve, more and more irritated, seizing hold of the small hand of Fleur de Marie. Answer—answer! Why have you made me wish for a life I cannot have?"

"To wish for an honest and industrious life is to be worthy of such a life, I have told you," answered Fleur de Marie, without seeking to disengage her hand. "Well! what then, when I

shall be worthy? what does that prove? how does it advance me?"

"To see realized that which you regard as a dream," said Fleur de Marie, in a voice so serious, so convincing, that La Louve, again overpowered, abandoned the hand of La Goualeuse, and remained struck with astonishment. "Listen to me, La Louve," added Marie, in a voice full of compassion; "do not think me so cruel as to awaken in you these thoughts, these hopes, if I were not sure, in making you ashamed of your present condition, to give you the means to escape from it?" "You! you cannot do that."

"I—no; but some one who is good, great, all-powerful."

"All-powerful?" "Listen again, La Louve. Three months since, like you I was a poor, lost, abandoned creature. One day, he, of whom I speak with tears of gratitude"—and Fleur de Marie wiped her tears—"one day he came to me; he was not afraid, all debased, all despised as I was, to speak to me words of consolation—the first I ever heard! I told him my sufferings, my misery, my shame, without concealing anything, just as you have now related to me your life, La Louve. After having listened to me with kindness, he did not blame—he pitied me; he did not deride me for my degradation—he extolled the happy and peaceful life of the country."

"Like you just now."

"Then my situation appeared the more frightful, as the possible future which he pointed out seemed to me more enchanting."

"Like me, *mon Dieu*!"

"Yes; and thus like you I said 'What good, alas! to show me this paradise—I, who am condemned to a hell upon earth?' But I was wrong to despair; for he of whom I speak is like the 'bon Dieu,' sovereignly just, sovereignly good, and incapable of causing a false hope to shine in the eyes of a poor creature who asked neither pity, nor hope, nor happiness from any one."

"And for you—what did he do?"

"He treated me like a sick child; I was, like you, plunged in an air so corrupt, he sent me to breathe a salubrious and vivifying atmosphere; I lived also among hideous and criminal beings; he confided me to beings made after his own image, who have purified my soul, elevated my mind; for, like the *bon Dieu* again, to all those he loves and respects he gives a spark of his celestial intelligence. Yes, if my words move you, La Louve, if my tears cause your tears to flow, it is his mind, his thoughts inspire me! if I speak to you of a future more happy, which you will obtain by repentance, it is that I can promise you this future in his name, although he is now ignorant of the engagement I make! In fine, if I say to you, 'Hope!' it is because he always hears the voice of those who desire to become better; for God has sent him on this earth to cause a belief in Providence."

Thus speaking, the countenance of Fleur de Marie became glowing and inspired; her pale cheeks were coloured for a moment with a slight carnation; her beautiful blue eyes softly sparkled; she beamed forth a beauty so noble, so touching, that La Louve, profoundly affected at this conversation, looked at her companion with admiration, and cried, "*Mon Dieu*! where am I? Do I dream? I have never heard nor seen anything like this; it is not possible! but who are you, once more? oh! I said truly that you were not one of us! But then you who speak so well, you who can do so much, you

who know such powerful people, how is it that you are here, a prisoner with us? But—but—it is, then, to tempt us? You are, then, for—good—what the devil is for evil?"

Fleur de Marie was about to reply, when Madame Armand came and interrupted her to conduct her to Madame d'Harville. She said to La Louve, who remained dumb from surprise, "I see with pleasure that the presence of La Goualeuse in the prison has been beneficial to you and your companions. I know that you have made a collection for this poor *Mont Saint Jean*; this is good, this is charitable, La Louve. This shall be reckoned to you. I was sure that you were better than you appeared to be. In recompense for your good action, I think I can promise you that your imprisonment shall be abridged by many days." And Madame Armand departed, followed by Fleur de Marie.*

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROTECTRESS.

THE inspectress entered, with La Goualeuse, the room where Clémence was; the pale cheeks of the young girl were slightly flushed from her earnest conversation with La Louve.

"Madame la Marquise, pleased with the excellent accounts I have given of you," said Madame Armand to Fleur de Marie, "desires to see you, and perhaps will deign to obtain permission for you to leave here before the expiration of your time." "I thank you, madame," answered Fleur de Marie, timidly, to Madame Armand, who left her alone with the marquise.

Clémence, struck with the beautiful features of her protégée, and her graceful and modest bearing, could not prevent herself from remembering that the Goualeuse had, in her sleep, pronounced the name of Rodolphe, and that the inspectress believed her to be preyed upon by a deep and concealed love. Although perfectly convinced that the Grand-duke Rodolphe could not be in the question, Clémence allowed that, at least in point of beauty, La Goualeuse was worthy of the love of a prince. At the sight of her protectress, whose expression, as we have said, was that of ineffable goodness, Fleur de Marie felt herself irresistibly drawn towards her.

"My child," said Clémence, "in praising much the sweetness of your disposition and the exemplary propriety of your conduct, Madame Armand complains of your want of confidence in her."

* The reflections of the author on the present state of the criminal law in France we omit. He contends for a system of rewards as well as punishments. He says, "Justice is represented as blind, carrying in one hand a sword to punish; in the other, the scales to weigh the accusation and defence. This is not the image of Justice. It is an image of the Law, or, rather, of the man who condemns or absolves according to his conscience. Justice should have in one hand a sword, in the other a crown; the one to punish the guilty, the other to reward the good." We omit, as we have said, many of the author's meditations and descriptions, for several reasons; perhaps it will suffice to mention one. In describing some of the *mysteries*, and the thoughts which they occasion, the author is naturally obliged to be very minute, too much so to be rendered into English. We have therefore concluded to pass lightly over these passages, strongly advising all those who have a knowledge of the French language to read the original, for much, very much, is lost by the translation.—Note by the Translator.

Fleur de Marie held down her head without replying.

"The peasant dress in which you were clothed when you were arrested, your silence on the subject of where you resided before you came here, prove that you conceal something."

"Madame—" "I have no right to your confidence, my poor child, I wish to ask you no improper questions; only I am assured, that if I ask your release from prison, it will be granted. Before I ask, I wish to talk with you of your projects, your resources for the future. Once free, what will you do? If, as I doubt not, you are decided to follow in the good path you have entered, have confidence in me—I will put you in a way to gain your living honourably."

La Goualeuse was affected to tears at the interest Madame d'Harville evinced for her. She said, after a moment's thought, "You deign, madame, to show yourself so benevolent, so generous, that I ought, perhaps, to break the silence which I have hitherto preserved as to the past; an oath compelled me." "An oath?" "Yes, madame; I have sworn to conceal from justice, and from the persons employed in this prison, in what manner I have been brought here; yet, if you will, madame, make me a promise—" "What promise?" "To keep my secret, I can, thanks to you, madame, without breaking my oath, relieve some respectable people, who, doubtless, are very uneasy about me." "Count on my discretion; I will only tell what you authorize me to say." "Oh! thank you, madame; I feared so much that my silence towards my benefactors would look like ingratitude." The sweet tears of Fleur de Marie, her language, almost chosen, struck Madame d'Harville with renewed astonishment. "I cannot conceal from you," said she, "that your bearing, your words, all astonish me much. How, with an education such as you appear to have had, how could you—" "Fall so low? Is it not, madame?" said the Goualeuse, bitterly. "It is that, alas!" "It is but a short time since I received it. I owe it to a generous protector, who, like you, madame, without knowing me, without ever having the favourable accounts which they have given you here of me, took compassion on me." "And this protector, who is he?" "I am ignorant, madame." "You are ignorant?" "He has only made himself known to me by his inexhaustible goodness; thanks to heaven I found myself in his way." "And where did you meet him?" "One night, in the cité, madame," said La Goualeuse, casting down her eyes, "a man wanted to strike me; this unknown benefactor courageously defended me; such was my first encounter with him." "He was, then, a man of the common order?" "The first time I saw him, he had their dress and language, but afterward—" "Afterward?" "The manner in which he spoke to me, the profound respect shown him by the people to whom he confided me, all proved to me that he had disguised himself as one of the men who frequent the cité." "But for what purpose?" "I do not know." "And the name of this mysterious protector, do you know it?" "Oh yes, madame," said the Goualeuse, with warmth, "Dieu merci! for I can bless and adore without ceasing this name. My deliverer is called M. Rodolphe, madame."

Clémence blushed deeply: "And has he no other name?" asked she, quickly, of Fleur de Marie. "I do not know, madame. At the farm where he sent me, he was only known by the name of M. Rodolphe." "And his age?" "He is still young, madame." "And handsome?" "Oh yes; handsome, noble—as his heart." The grateful, feeling manner with which Fleur de Marie pronounced these words, caused a disagreeable sensation to Madame d'Harville. An invincible, an inexplicable presentiment told her that this Rodolphe was the prince.

"The observations of the inspectors were well founded," thought Clémence. "The Goualeuse loved Rodolphe; it was his name she pronounced in her sleep? Under what strange circumstances had the prince and this poor girl met? Why did Rodolphe go disguised into the cité?" The marquise could not resolve these questions; only she remembered that Sarah had formerly, wickedly and falsely, related to her some pretended eccentricities of Rodolphe, and of his strange "amours." Was it not, in effect, strange that he had taken from a life of misery this creature, of ravishing beauty, and of no common mind? Clémence had noble qualities, but she was a woman, and she loved Rodolphe profoundly, although she had determined to bury this secret in the very depths of her heart. Without reflecting that this, no doubt, was one of those generous actions which the prince was accustomed to do secretly; without reflecting that, perhaps, she confounded with love, a sentiment of warm gratitude; without reflecting, finally, that this sentiment, even if it were more tender, Rodolphe might be ignorant of it, the marquise, in the first feeling of bitterness and injustice, could not prevent herself from considering the Goualeuse as a rival. Her pride revolted in feeling that she blushed, that she suffered, in spite of herself, at a rivalry so abject. She resumed, then, in a cold manner, which cruelly contrasted with the affectionate benevolence of her first words: "And how is it, mademoiselle, that your protector leaves you in prison? How did you get here?" "Mon Dieu! madame," said Fleur de Marie, timidly, struck with this change of language; "have I displeased you in any way?" "And in what could you have displeased me?" demanded Madame d'Harville, with hauteur.

"It is, that it seems to me that just now you spoke to me with more kindness, madame." "Truly, mademoiselle, must I weigh each of my words, since I consent to interest myself in you? I have the right, I think, to address to you certain questions." Hardly were these words pronounced, than Clémence, for many reasons, regretted their severity. In the first place, by a praiseworthy return of generosity; then because she thought by offending her rival, she could learn nothing more of what she wished to know.

In effect, the countenance of La Goualeuse, one moment open and confiding, became instantly "craintive."

Like the sensitive plant, which at the first touch closes its delicate leaves, and folds them within its bosom, the heart of Fleur de Marie contracted painfully. Clémence resumed gently, not to awaken the suspicions of her protégée by too sudden a change. "In truth, I repeat to

you, I cannot comprehend that, having so much to praise in your benefactor, you should be a prisoner here; how, after having sincerely returned to the paths of rectitude, could you cause yourself to be arrested in a place to you interdicted! All this seems to me extraordinary. You speak of an oath which so far has imposed silence upon you; but this oath, even, is so strange!" "I have told the truth, madame." "I am sure of it: one has only to see and hear you, to believe you incapable of a falsehood; but, what is incomprehensible in your situation, augments, irritates my impatient curiosity; it is only to that that you must attribute the vivacity of my words just now. Come, I avow it. I was wrong, for although I had no other right to your confidence than my earnest wish to be useful to you, you have offered to tell me that which you have told to no one, and I am very sensible, believe me, my poor child, of this proof of your faith in the interest I have for you. Hence, I promise you, in guarding scrupulously your secret, if you confide it to me, I will do all in my power to meet your wishes." Thanks to this palliating speech, Madame d'Harville regained the confidence of La Goualeuse, for a moment impaired. Fleur de Marie, in her innocence, reproached herself for having misinterpreted the words which had wounded her.

"Pardon me, madame," said she: "I was doubtless wrong not to tell you at once what you wished to know; but you asked me the name of my saviour: in spite of myself, I cannot resist the pleasure of speaking of him." "Nothing is better; it proves how grateful you are towards him. But why have you left the good people with whom he had placed you? Does your oath have reference to this?" "Yes, madame; but, thanks to you, I believe now, still keeping my word, I shall be able to satisfy my benefactors as to my disappearance." "Come, my poor child, I listen." "It is about three months since M. Rodolphe placed me at a farm situated four or five leagues hence." "He conducted you there himself?" "Yes, madame; he confided me to the care of a lady as good as she was venerable, whom I soon loved as a mother. She and the curé of the village, at the request of M. Rodolphe, took charge of my education." "And Monsieur Rodolphe, did he often come to the farm?" "No, madame; he came there only three times while I was there." Clémence could not conceal a thrill of joy.

"And when he came to see you, it made you very happy, did it not?" "Oh! yes, madame! it was for me more than happiness; it was a sentiment mixed with gratitude, respect, admiration, and even a little fear." "Fear?" "From him to me—from him to others—the distance is so great!" "But what is his rank?" "I am ignorant if he has any rank, madame." "Yet, you speak of the distance which exists between him and others." "Oh! madame, that which places him above the rest of the world, is the elevation of his character—his inexhaustible generosity for those who suffer; it is the enthusiasm with which he inspires everybody. The wicked even cannot hear his name without trembling; they respect him as much as they fear him. But pardon me, Madame, for having again spoken of him—'je dois me taire'—I should give you but an imperfect idea of him

whom I ought to content myself with adoring in silence. As well attempt to express by words the grandeur of God! This comparison is, perhaps, sacrilegious, madame. But will it offend God to compare to him the man who has given me a consciousness of good and evil—who has dragged me from the abyss—to whom I owe a new existence?"

"I do not blame you, my child; I comprehend your feelings. But how have you abandoned this farm, where you were so happy?"

"Alas, it was not voluntary, madame!"

"Who forced you, then?" "One night, a short time since," said Fleur de Marie, trembling at the recital, "I went to the parsonage of the village, when a wicked woman, who had treated me cruelly in my childhood, and a man, her accomplice, who was concealed with her in a ravine, threw themselves upon me, wrapped me up, and carried me off in a carriage." "And for what purpose?" "I do not know, madame. My waylayers were acting, I think, under the orders of some powerful persons." "What then ensued?" "Hardly had the vehicle moved, than the bad woman, whose name was La Chouette, cried, 'I have got some vitriol; I am going to wash the face of La Goualeuse, to disfigure her.'"

"How horrid! unfortunate child! and what saved you from this danger?" "The accomplice of this woman, a blind man, called the Maître d'Ecole." "He defended you?" "Yes, madame, on this occasion and on another. This time a struggle ensued between him and La Chouette. Availing himself of his strength, he forced her to throw out of the window the bottle which contained the vitriol. This was the first service he rendered me, after having assisted in carrying me off. The night was very dark. At the end of an hour and a half the carriage stopped, I believe on the high road which crosses the plain of Saint Denis; a man on horseback waited for us here: 'Well!' said he, 'have you got her at last?' 'Yes, we have her,' answered La Chouette, who was furious at having been prevented from disfiguring me. 'If you wish to get rid of this little thing, there is a good way; I will stretch her on the road—drive the wheels of the carriage over her head—she will look as if she was run over by accident.'"

"Oh! this is frightful!" "Alas! madame, La Chouette was well capable of doing what she said. Happily, the man on horseback said that he did not wish to harm me; that it was only necessary to keep me shut up for two months in some place where I could neither get out, nor write to any one. Then La Chouette proposed to take me to a man called Bras-Rouge, who kept a tavern in the Champs Elysées. In this tavern there were several subterranean chambers; one of them, La Chouette said, could answer for my prison; the man on horseback accepted this proposition; then he promised me that, after remaining two months with Bras-Rouge, I should be so provided for, that I would not regret the farm at Bouqueval."

"What strange mystery!" "This man gave some money to La Chouette, promised her some more when I should be taken from Bras-Rouge, and set out on a gallop. We continued our route towards Paris. A short time before we arrived at the gates, the Maître d'Ecole said to La Chouette, 'You wish to

shut up La Goualeuse in one of the cellars of Bras-Rouge; you know very well that, being near the river, these cellars in winter are always inundated.' 'Do you wish, then, to drown her?' 'Yes,' answered La Chouette. "But, mon Dieu! what had you done to this horrible woman?" "Nothing, madame; and yet, since my infancy, she has always shown this feeling towards me. The Maître d'Ecole answered, 'I will not have the Goualeuse drowned; she shall not go to Bras-Rouge.' La Chouette was as much surprised as I was, madame, to hear this man defend me thus. She became furious, and swore that she would take me to Bras-Rouge in spite of him. 'I defy you,' said he, 'for I have La Goualeuse by the arm; I will not let her go, and I'll strangle you if you come near her.' 'But what do you mean to do with her there?' cried La Chouette, 'since she must be put out of the way for two months.' 'There is a way,' said the Maître d'Ecole; 'we are going to the Champs Elysées; we will stop the carriage near the guard-house; you will go and look for Bras-Rouge at his tavern—it is midnight; you will find him there; you will bring him with you; he will take La Goualeuse to the post, and declare she is a "fille de la cité," whom he found near his tavern. As these girls are condemned to three months imprisonment when they are caught in the Champs Elysées, and the Goualeuse is still on the lists at the police, she will be arrested, and sent to Saint Lazare, where she will be as well guarded and concealed as in the cellar of Bras-Rouge.' 'But,' replied La Chouette, 'the Goualeuse will not suffer herself to be arrested; once at the guard-house, she will tell all; she will denounce us. Supposing, even, that she is imprisoned, she will write to her protectors; all will be discovered.' 'No, she will go to prison willingly,' answered the Maître d'Ecole; 'she will swear that she will not denounce us to any one as long as she remains at Saint Lazare, nor afterward neither; she owes this to me, for I have prevented her being disfigured by you, and drowned at Bras-Rouge's; but if, after having sworn not to speak, she should do it, we will put the farm at Bouqueval to fire and blood!' Then, addressing me, he said, 'Decide; swear the oath I ask; you shall go to prison for two months; otherwise I abandon you to La Chouette, who will take you to the cellar of Bras-Rouge, where you shall be drowned. Come, decide. I know, if you swear, you will keep your oath.' "And you have sworn?"

"Alas! yes, madame; I feared so much to be disfigured by La Chouette or to be drowned in a cellar; this appeared to me so frightful. Any other kind of death would have appeared less fearful. I should not, perhaps, have endeavoured to escape."

"What a gloomy idea at your age!" said Madame d'Harville, looking at La Goualeuse with surprise. "Once away from this place, returned to your benefactors, will you not be very happy? Has not your repentance effaced the past?" "Can the past be effaced? Can the past be forgotten? Can repentance destroy the memory, madame?" cried Fleur de Marie, in a tone so despairing, that Clémence shuddered. "But all faults can be redeemed, un-

happy child!" "And the recollection of the stain—madame, does it not become more and more terrible in measure as the mind is purified, as the soul becomes elevated? Alas! the more you mount, the deeper appears the abyss from which you have emerged." "Then you renounce all hope of re-establishment, of pardon?" "On the part of others—no, madame: your goodness proves that indulgence is never wanting to the penitent." "You will then be the only one without pity towards yourself!" "Others may be ignorant, may pardon and forget what I have been. I, madame, I never can forget." "And sometimes you wish to die!" "Sometimes!" said La Goualeuse, smiling bitterly; "yes, madame, sometimes." "Yet you feared to be disfigured by that horrible woman? you hold to your beauty, then, poor child! That announces that life has still some charms for you. Courage, then—courage!"

"It is perhaps, a weakness to think so; but if I were handsome, as you say, madame, I should wish to die handsome, in pronouncing the name of my benefactor."

The eyes of Madame d'Harville filled with tears.

Fleur de Marie had said these words so simply; her angelic features, pale and cast down, her mournful smile, were so much in unison with her words, that no one could doubt the reality of her gloomy desire. Madame d'Harville was endowed with too much sensibility not to feel what was fatal and inflexible in this thought of La Goualeuse—"I shall never forget what I have been"—a fixed, constant idea, which would predominate, torture the life of Fleur de Marie. Clémence, ashamed at having for a moment misunderstood the generosity, always so disinterested, of the prince, also regretted that she should have had for a moment a feeling of jealousy towards La Goualeuse, who had expressed, with so much warmth, her gratitude towards her protector. Strange thing—the admiration which this poor prisoner showed so vividly for Rodolphe, augmented, perhaps, still more the profound love which Clémence was forever to conceal from him. She resumed, to drive away her thoughts: "I hope that, in future, you will be less severe towards yourself. But let us speak of your oath; now I can understand your silence. You did not wish to denounce these wretches?" "Although the Maître d'Ecole took part in my abduction, he had twice defended me—I was afraid of being ungrateful towards him." "And you lent yourself to the designs of these monsters?" "Yes, madame, I was so much alarmed! La Chouette went to seek Bras-Rouge; he took me to the guard-house, saying he found me roving about his inn; I did not deny it; I was arrested, and brought here." "But your friends at the farm must be very much alarmed?" "Alas! madame, in my fright, I did not reflect that my oath would prevent me from informing them; now it gives me much pain, but I believe, is it not so? that without breaking my oath, I can beg you to write to Madame Georges, at the farm of Bouqueval, to have no uneasiness about me, without telling her where I am, for I have promised to be silent."

"My child, these precautions will become useless if, at my recommendation, you are par-

done; to-morrow you shall return to the farm, without having broken your oath; you can then consult your benefactors, to know how far you are restricted by this oath, drawn from you by threats.

"You think, madame, that, thanks to your kindness, I can hope to leave here soon?" "You deserve so much interest, that I shall succeed, I am sure, and I doubt not that after to-morrow you can go yourself to reassure your benefactors."

"Mon Dieu! madame, how can I have merited so much kindness on your part? how can I show my gratitude?"

"By continuing to conduct yourself as you have done. I only regret I can do nothing for your future welfare—it is a pleasure that your friends have reserved." Madame Armand entered suddenly, with an alarmed air. "Madame la Marquise," said she to Clémence with hesitation, "I am grieved at the message I have to deliver to you." "What do you mean to say, madame?" "M. le Duc de Lucenay is below—he comes from your house, madame. "Mon Dieu! you frighten me: what is it?" "I am ignorant, madame; but M. de Lucenay has information for you, he says, as sad as it was unforeseen. He learned at Madame la Duchesse, his wife's, that you were here, and he came in all haste."

"Sad news!" said Madame d'Harville. Then suddenly she cried, in a heart-rending tone, "My daughter—my child, perhaps! oh! speak, madame!" "I am ignorant, madame." "Oh! in mercy, mercy, madame, take me to M. de Lucenay," cried Madame d'Harville, going out, quite bewildered, and followed by Madame Armand. "Poor mother!" said the Goualeuse sadly, "oh! no, it is impossible! at the moment even when she was showing so much benevolence towards me, such a blow to fall! No, no—once more, it is impossible!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A FORCED INTIMACY.

We will conduct the reader to the house in the Rue du Temple, the day of the suicide of M. d'Harville, about three o'clock in the afternoon. M. Pipelet, alone in the lodge, conscientious and indefatigable workman, was occupied in mending the boot which had more than once fallen from his hands, during the last and audacious insult of Cabrion. The physiognomy of the chaste porter was dejected, and much more melancholy than usual. Thus, like a soldier, in the humiliation of his defeat, passes his hand sadly over his scars, M. Pipelet breathed a profound sigh, stopped his work, and moved his trembling finger over the transverse fracture, of which his venerable "chapeau tromblon" had been the victim, by the insolent hand of Cabrion. Then all the chagrin, all the inquietude, all the fears of Alfred were awakened in thinking of the inconceivable and incessant pursuits of the "rapin."

M. Pipelet had not a very extended or elevated mind; his imagination was not the most lively nor the most poetical, but he possessed a very solid, very logical, very common sense.

Unfortunately, by a natural consequence of the rectitude of his judgment, not being able to comprehend the eccentricity and foolish bearing of that which, in the language of workshops, is called "*une charge*," M. Pipelet endeavoured to find some reasonable possible motive for the outrageous conduct of Cabrion, and on this subject he posed himself with a thousand not to be solved questions. Thus, sometimes a new Pascal, he felt himself seized with a vertigo in trying to sound the bottomless abyss which the infernal genius of the painter had dug under his feet. How many times, in the overflowings of his imagination, he had been forced to commune within himself, thanks to the phrensiad skepticism of Madame Pipelet, who, only looking at facts, and disdaining to seek after causes, grossly considered the incomprehensible conduct of Cabrion towards Alfred as a simple farce.

M. Pipelet, a serious and grave man, could not admit of such an interpretation; he groaned at the blindness of his wife; his dignity as a man revolted at the thought that he could be the plaything of a combination so vulgar: a farce! He was absolutely convinced that the unheard-of conduct of Cabrion concealed some mysterious plot under a frivolous appearance.

We have said it was to resolve this fatal problem that the man in the "chapeau tromblon," exhausted his powerful logic. "I would sooner lay my head on the scaffold," said this austere man, who, as soon as he touched them, increased immensely the importance of any propositions, "I would sooner lay my head upon the scaffold than to admit that, in the unique intention of a stupid pleasantry, Cabrion could be so obstinately exasperated against me; a farce is only played for the gallery. Now, in his last undertaking, this obnoxious creature had no witness; he acted alone and in obscurity, as always; he has clandestinely introduced himself into the solitude of my lodge to deposite on my forehead his hideous kiss. And that! I will ask any disinterested person, for what purpose? It was not from bravado—no one saw him; it was not from pleasure—the laws of nature oppose it; it was not from friendship—I have but one enemy in the world—it is he. It must, then, be acknowledged that there is a mystery there which my reason cannot penetrate! Then what does this diabolical plot tend to? a plot concerted with a long hand and pursued with a persistence which alarms me. This is what I cannot comprehend: it is this impossibility to raise the veil, which, by degrees, is undermining and consumes me."

Such were the painful reflections of M. Pipelet at the moment when we present him to our readers. The honest porter had just torn open his bleeding wounds, by carrying his hand mechanically to the fracture of his hat, when a piercing voice, coming from one of the upper stories of the house, made these words resound again: "Monsieur Pipelet, quick! quick! come up! make haste!" "I do not know this organ," said Alfred, after a moment of anxious listening, and he let his arm, enclosed in the boot he was mending, fall on his knees. "Monsieur Pipelet! make haste, then!" repeated the voice in a pressing tone. "This organ is completely strange to me. It is masculine: it calls me,

that I can affirm. It is not a sufficient reason that I should abandon my lodge. Leave it alone—desert it in the absence of my wife—never!” cried Alfred, heroically, “never!” “Monsieur Pipelet,” said the voice, “come up quick! Madame Pipelet is sick!”

“Anastasia!” cried Alfred, rising from his seat; then he fell back again, saying to himself, “Child that I am—it is impossible; my wife went out an hour ago; yes, but might she not have returned without my seeing her! This would be rather irregular; but I must declare that it is possible.”

“Monsieur Pipelet, come up, then, I have your wife in my arms!” “Some one has my wife in their arms!” said M. Pipelet, rising abruptly. “I cannot unlace Madame Pipelet all alone!” added the voice. These words produced a magical effect upon Alfred: his face became flush; his chastity revolted. “The masculine and unknown organ speaks of unlacing Anastasia!” cried he; “I oppose it! I forbid it!” and he rushed out of the lodge; but on the threshold he stopped. M. Pipelet found himself in one of those horribly critical, and eminently dramatical positions, so often described by poets. On the one hand, duty retained him in his lodge; on the other, his chaste and conjugal susceptibility called him to the upper stories of the house. In the midst of these terrible perplexities, the voice said, “You don’t come, Monsieur Pipelet? so much the worse—I cut the strings, and I shut my eyes!” This threat decided M. Pipelet.

“*Monsieur!*” cried he, in a stentorian voice, “in the name of honour, I conjure you, *monsieur*, to cut nothing—to leave my wife intact! I come!” and Alfred rushed up stairs, leaving, in his alarm, the door of the lodge open. Hardly had he left it, when a man entered quickly, took from the table a hammer, jumped on the bed, at the back part of the obscure alcove of M. Pipelet, and then vanished. This operation was done so quickly, that the porter, remembering, almost immediately, that he had left the door open, returned precipitately, shut it, and carried off the key, without suspecting that any one could have entered in this interval. After this measure of precaution, Alfred started again to the assistance of Anastasia, crying, with all his strength, “*Monsieur!* cut nothing—I am coming—here I am—I place my wife under the safeguard of your delicacy!”

Hardly had he mounted the first flight, before he heard the voice of Anastasia, not from the upper story, but in the “allée.” This voice, shriller than ever, cried, “Alfred! here you leave the lodge alone! Where are you, then, old gad-about?” At this moment, M. Pipelet was about placing his right foot on the landing-place of the first story; he remained petrified, his head turned towards the bottom of the stairs, his mouth open, his eyes fixed, his foot raised. “Alfred!” cried Madame Pipelet, anew. “Anastasia is below—she is not above, occupied in being sick!” said M. Pipelet to himself, faithful to his logical and close argumentation. “But, then, this unknown and masculine organ, who threatened me to unlace her, who is it? Is it an impostor? He, then, has been playing a cruel game with my iniquitude! What is his design! There is some-

thing extraordinary going on here! No matter: do your duty, happen what may! After having responded to my wife, I shall mount to enlighten this mystery, and verify this organ.”

M. Pipelet descended, very much troubled, and found himself face to face with his wife. “It is you!” said he. “Well! yes, it is me; whom would you have it to be?” “It is you,—my eyes do not deceive me!” “Ah, now! what is the matter now, that makes your big eyes look like loto balls! You look at me as if you were going to eat me.” “It is that your presence reveals to me that something has been passing here—things—” “What things? Come, give me the key of the lodge; why do you leave it alone? I come from the office of the diligences from Normandy, where I went in a hack, to carry the trunk of M. Bradamanté, who did not wish it to be known that he was about to leave to-night, and who could not depend on that little scoundrel, Tortillard—and he is right!” On saying these words, Madame Pipelet took the key, which her husband held in his hand, opened the lodge, and went in before her husband.

Hardly had they entered, when a person, descending the staircase lightly, passed rapidly and unperceived before the lodge. It was the masculine organ which had so vividly excited the inquietudes of Alfred.

M. Pipelet rested himself heavily on his chair, and said to his wife, in a trembling voice, “Anastasia, I do not feel at my accustomed ease; things occurring here—events—” “Now you repeat this again; but things occur everywhere; what is the matter! Come, let us see—ah! now, but you are all wet—all in a sweat! What effort have you been making? He’s all a-trickling—the old darling!”

“Yes, I trickle, and I have reason to;” and M. Pipelet passed his hand over his face dripping with perspiration; “for there are passing here things to overturn.” “Again I ask what is it? You never can remain quiet. You must always be trotting about like a lean cat, instead of remaining in your chair to take care of the lodge.” “Anastasia, you are unjust in saying that I trot like a lean cat. If I trot, it is for you.” “For me?” “Yes; to spare you an outrage of which we both should have groaned and blushed, I have deserted a post which I consider as sacred as the sentry-box of a soldier.” “Some one wished to commit an outrage on me—on me?”

“It was not on you, since the outrage of which you were threatened was to have been accomplished upstairs; and that you were gone out; but—” “May the devil run away with me, if I understand a single word of what you are singing there! Ah! ah! is it that you are decidedly losing your noddle? Look here! do you see? I shall begin to think that you are absent-minded—hammer-struck; and this the fault of this beggarly Cabron, whom the devil confound! Since his farce of the other day, I don’t know you; you look struck all of a heap. That being will be, then, always your nightmare!” Hardly had Anastasia pronounced the words than a strange thing came to pass. Alfred remained sitting, his face turned towards the bed. The lodge was lighted by the sickly light of a winter’s day, and by a lamp. At the

moment when his wife pronounced the name of *Cabron*, M. Pipelet thought he saw in the shade of the alcove the immovable and cunning face of the painter. It was he, his pointed hat, his long hair, his thin face, his satanic smile, his beard, and his paralyzing gaze. For a moment M. Pipelet thought himself in a dream; he passed his hand over his eyes, believing that he was the victim of an illusion. It was not an illusion. Nothing could be more real than this apparition. Frightful thing, no body could be seen, but only a head, of which the living flesh stood out in bold relief from the obscurity of the alcove. At this sight, M. Pipelet fell over backward, without saying a word; he raised his right arm towards the bed, and pointed at this terrible vision, with a gesture so alarming, that Madame Pipelet turned to seek the cause of an alarm of which she soon partook, in spite of her habitual courage. She recoiled two steps, seized with force the hand of Alfred, and cried, "*Cabron!*"

"*Yes!*" murmured M. Pipelet, in a hollow voice, almost extinct, shutting his eyes. The stupor of the pair paid the greatest honour to the talent of the artist who had so admirably painted on the pasteboard the features of *Cabron*. Her first surprise over, Anastasia, as bold as a lion, ran to the bed, got on it, and tore the picture from the wall.

The amazon crowned this valiant enterprise in shouting, as a war-cry, her favourite exclamation, "*Et allez donc!*" Alfred, with his eyes closed, his hands stretched forth, remained immovable, as he had always been accustomed to do in the critical moments of his life. The convulsive oscillations of his "*chapeau tromblon*" alone revealed, from time to time, the continued violence of his interior emotions. "Open your eyes, old darling," said Madame Pipelet, triumphantly; "*it's nothing; it's a picture; the portrait of this scoundrel of a Cabron!* Look, see how I stamp upon him!" and Anastasia, in her indignation, threw the picture on the ground, and trampled it under her feet, crying, "*That's the way I would like to treat his flesh and bones, the wretch!*" then, picking it up, "*See,*" said she, "*now it has my marks; look now!*" Alfred shook his head negatively, without saying a word, and making a sign to his wife to take away the detested picture. "Has ever any one seen such impudence? This is not all; he has written at the bottom, in red letters, '*Cabron, to his good friend Pipelet; for life,*'" said the portière, examining the picture by the light. "*His good friend for life!*" murmured Alfred; and he raised his hands towards heaven, as if to call it to witness this new and outrageous irony. "But, how could he do it?" said Anastasia. "This portrait was not there this morning when I made the bed, very sure. You took the key with you just now: nobody could have entered while you were absent? How, then, once more, could this portrait get there? Ah now, could it be—could it be you, by chance, who put it there, old darling?" At this monstrous hypothesis, Alfred bounced from his seat; he opened his eyes, wide and threatening. "I—I fasten in my alcove the portrait of this evildoer, who, not content with persecuting me by his odious presence, pursues me at night in my dreams—the daytime in a pic-

ture! But will you make me mad, then, Anastasia! mad enough to be chained?" "Well! what then! When, for the sake of making peace, you should have agreed with *Cabron* during my absence. Where would be the great harm!"

"I make up with—oh, mon Dieu! you hear her!" "And then, he would have given you his portrait, as a pledge of friendship. If this is so, do not deny it." "Anastasia! if this is so, it must be confessed you are as capricious as a pretty woman." "My wife!" "But, in fine, it must have been you who placed the portrait!" "I—oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" "But who is it, then?" "You, madame." "I!" "Yes," cried M. Pipelet, wildly, "it is you; I have reason to believe it is you. This morning, having my back turned towards the bed, I could see nothing." "But, old darling, I tell you it must be you, otherwise I shall think it was the devil—since I have not left the lodge, and that when I went up stairs to answer to the call of the *masculine organ*, I had the key; the door was shut—you opened it: deny that!" "Ma foi, it is true!" "You confess, then?" "I confess that I comprehend nothing. It's a farce, and it is prettily played—must be just." "A farce!" cried M. Pipelet, carried away by a phrensied indignation. "Ah! there you are again—a farce! I tell you, I, that all this conceals some abominable plot: there is something under all this—a complot. The abyss is hidden under flowers—they try to stun me to prevent my seeing the precipice from which they wish to plunge me. It only remains for me to place myself under the protection of the laws: Happily, '*Dieu protège la France*' (God protects France); and M. Pipelet turned towards the door. "Where are you going to, old darling?" "To the commissary's to lodge my complaint, and this portrait as proof of the persecutions I am overwhelmed with." "But what will you complain of?" "What will I complain of? How! my most inveterate enemy shall find means by proceedings—fraudulent—to force me to have his portrait in my house, even on my nuptial bed! and the magistrates will not take me under their *egis*? Give me this portrait, Anastasia—give it to me—not the side where the painting is, that sight revolts me! The traitor cannot deny it; it is in his hand: *Cabron to his good friend Pipelet for life*. For life! Yes, it is that—it is for my life, without doubt, that he pursues me, and he will finish by having it. I live in continual alarm: I shall think that this infernal being is there, always there—under the floor, in the walls, in the ceiling! at night, that he sees me reposing in the arms of my wife; in the daytime, that he is standing behind me, always with his satanic smile; and who will tell me that even at this moment he is not here, concealed somewhere, like a venomous insect? Come, now! are you there, monster? are you here?" cried M. Pipelet, accompanying this furious imprecation with a circular movement of the head, as if he had wished to interrogate all parts of the lodge.

"I am here, good friend!" said, most affectionately, the well-known voice of *Cabron*. These words seemed to come from the bottom of the alcove, merely from the effects of ventriloquism; for the infernal '*rapin*' was standing outside

the door of the lodge, enjoying the smallest details of this scene; however, after having pronounced these last words, he prudently made off, not without leaving, as we shall see, a new subject of rage, astonishment, and meditation to his victim. Madame Pipelet, always courageous and skeptical, looked under the bed, and in every hole and corner, without success, while M. Pipelet, undone by the last blow, had fallen on his chair, in a state of utter despair. "It's nothing, Alfred," said Anastasia; "the scoundrel was concealed behind the door, and while I looked one way, he escaped the other. Patience, I'll catch him one of these days, and then, let him look out! he shall eat the handle of my broom!" The door opened, and Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, entered.

"Good-day, Madame Séraphin," said Madame Pipelet, who, wishing to conceal from a stranger her domestic sorrows, assumed a very gracious and smiling air: "what can I do to serve you?" "First, tell me, then, what is your new sign?" "New sign?" "The little sign." "A little sign?" "Yes, black with red letters, which is nailed over the door of your alley." "How! in the street?" "Why yes, in the street, just over your door." "My dear Madame Séraphin, may I never speak again, if I understand a word; and you, old darling?"

Alfred remained dumb. "In truth, it concerns M. Pipelet," said Madame Séraphin; "he must explain this to me." Alfred uttered a sort of low, inarticulate groan, shaking his "chapeau tromblon." This pantomime signified that Alfred found himself incapable of explaining anything to others, being sufficiently preoccupied with an infinity of problems, each one more difficult of solution than the other. "Pay no attention, Madame Séraphin," said Anastasia: "this poor Alfred has got the cramp in his bowels, that makes him—" "But what is this sign, then, of which you speak?" "Perhaps our neighbour the rogomiste—" "But no, no; I tell you it is a little sign nailed over your door." "Come, you want to joke." "Not at all, I saw it as I came in; there is written on it in large letters, *Pipelet et Cabrión font commerce d'amitié et autres. Adressez au portier.*" "Ah, mon Dieu! there is this written over our door, do you hear, Alfred?"

M. Pipelet looked at Madame Séraphin with a wild stare; he did not comprehend; he did not wish to comprehend.

"There it is—in the street—on a sign!" repeated Madame Pipelet, confounded at this new audacity. "Yes, for I have just read it. Then I said to myself, 'What a funny thing! M. Pipelet is a cobbler by trade, and he informs the passers-by that he is engaged in a commerce d'amitié with a Monsieur Cabrión. What does it signify? There is something concealed, it is clear; but as the sign says, inquire of the porter, Madame Pipelet will explain it.' But look there," cried Madame Séraphin, suddenly, "your husband looks as if he were sick: take care, he will fall backward!" Madame Pipelet received Alfred in her arms, in a fainting state. This last blow had been too violent; the man in the "chapeau tromblon" nearly lost all consciousness as he pronounced these words: "The creature has publicly posted me!" "I told you,

Madame Séraphin, Alfred has the cramp in his bowels, without speaking of an unchained black-guard, who undermines him with his sorry tricks. The poor old darling cannot resist it! Happily, I have a drop of absinthe here; probably it will put him on his legs."

In effect, thanks to the infallible remedy of Madame Pipelet, Alfred by degrees recovered his senses; but, alas! hardly had he come to, than he had to undergo another trial.

A middle aged person, neatly dressed, and very pleasing face, opened the door, and said, "I have just seen on a sign placed over this alley, *Pipelet et Cabrión font commerce d'amitié, et autres. Adressez vous au portier.* Can you, if you please, do me the honour to inform me what this means—you, who are the porter of this house?" "What this means!" cried M. Pipelet in a thundering voice, giving vent to his indignation, too long suppressed; "this means that M. Cabrión is an infamous impostor, monsieur!"

The man, at this sudden and furious explosion, drew back a step. Alfred, much exasperated, with a fiery look and purple face, had stretched his body half out of the ledge, and leaned his two contracted hands on the lower part of the door, while the figures of Madame Séraphin and Anastasia could be vaguely seen in the background, in the semi-obscure light of the lodge. "Learn, monsieur," cried M. Pipelet, "that I have no commerce with this scoundrel Cabrión, and that of friendship still less than any other!"

"It is true; and you must be very queer, old 'cornichon' as you are, to come and ask such a question," cried Madame Pipelet, sharply, showing her quarrelsome face over the shoulder of her husband.

"Madame!" said the man sententially, falling back another step, "notices are made to be read; you put them up, I read; I have the right to do so, but you have no right to say such rude things."

"Rude things yourself, you beggarly wretch!" replied Anastasia, showing her teeth. "You are a low-bred person!"

"Alfred, your boot measure, that I can take the length of his muzzle, to teach him to come and play the 'forceur' at his age, old clown!" "Insults, when one comes to ask the meaning of a notice placed over your own door! It shall not pass over in this way, madame!" "But, monsieur," cried the unhappy porter. "But, monsieur," answered the quiz, pretending to be angry, "be as friendly as you please with your M. Cabrión, but, corbleu! don't stick it in large letters under the noses of the passers-by! I find myself under the necessity of telling you that you are a pitiful wretch, and that I shall go and make my complaint to the commissary," and the quiz departed in a great rage.

"Anastasia!" said M. Pipelet, in a sorrowful tone, "I shall not survive this, I feel it; I am wounded to death. I have no hope of escaping him. You see, my name is publicly stuck up alongside of this wretch. He dares to say that I have a friendly trade with him, and the public will believe it. I inform you—I say it—I communicate it; it is monstrous, it is enormous, it is an infernal idea: but it must finish; the measure is full; either he or I must fall in this struggle!" and, overcoming his

habitual apathy, M. Pipelet determined on a vigorous resolution, seized the portrait of Cabrion, and rushed towards the door. "Where are you going to, Alfred?" "To the commissary's. At the same time I am going to tear down this infamous sign; then, with this portrait and this sign in my hand, I will cry to the commissary, 'Defend me! avenge me! deliver me from Cabrion!'" "Well said, old darling; stir yourself, shake yourself; if you cannot get the sign down, tell the rogomiste to help you, and to lend you his little ladder." "Rascally Cabrion! Oh! if I had him, and I could do it, I'd fry him on my stove. I should like so much to see him suffer. Yes, there are people who are guillotined, who do not deserve it as much as he does. The wretch! I should like to see him on the Place du Grève, the villain!" Alfred showed under these circumstances the most sublime equanimity. Notwithstanding his great causes of revenge against Cabrion, he had the generosity to feel sentiments akin to pity for him. "No," said he, "no; even if I could, I would not ask for his head! As for me—yes, yes, yes—so much the worse. And—" "Allez donc!" cried the ferocious Anastasia. "No," replied Alfred, "I do not like blood; but I have a right to claim the perpetual seclusion of this evildoer; my repose requires it; my health commands it; the law accords me this reparation: otherwise, I leave la France—ma belle France! That is what they'll gain." And Alfred, swallowed up in his grief, walked majestically out of the lodge, like one of those imposing victims of ancient fatality.

CHAPTER XIV.

CECILY.

BEFORE we relate the conversation between Madame Séraphin and Madame Pipelet, we will inform the reader that Anastasia, without suspecting the least in the world the virtue and devotion of the notary, blamed extremely the severity he had shown towards Louise Morel and Germain. Naturally, the "portière" included Madame Séraphin in her reprobation; but like a skilful politician, for reasons which we will show by-and-by, she concealed her feeling for the housekeeper under a most cordial reception. After having formally disapproved of the unworthy conduct of Cabrion, Madame Séraphin added, "Ah, now! what has become of M. Bradamanti (Polidori)? Last night I wrote to him—no answer; this morning I came to find him—no one. I hope at this time I shall be more fortunate." Madame Pipelet feigned to be very much vexed. "Ah! for example," cried she, "you must have bad luck!" "How?" "M. Bradamanti has not come in." "It is insupportable!" "Hein! it is vexing, my poor Madame Séraphin!" "I, who have so much to say to him." "If it is not just like a fate!" "So much the more, as I have to invent so many pretexts for coming here; for if M. Ferrand ever suspected that I knew a quack, he who is so devout, so scrupulous, you can judge what a scene!" "Just like Alfred. He is so prudish, that he is startled at everything."

"And you do not know when Bradamanti will come in?" "He made an appointment for six or seven o'clock in the evening, for he told me to say to the person to call again if he had not returned. Come back this evening, you will be sure to find him." And Anastasia added, mentally, "You can count on this: in one hour he will be on the road to Normandy." "I will return, then, to-night," said Madame Séraphin, much annoyed; "but I have something else to say to you, my dear Madame Pipelet. You know what has happened to this wench of a Louise, whom every one thought so virtuous?" "Don't speak of it," answered Madame Pipelet, raising her eyes with compunction: "it makes my hair stand on end." "I want to tell you that we have no servant; and that, if by chance, you should hear spoken of a young girl, virtuous, good worker, honest, you will be very kind if you will address her to me. Good subjects are so difficult to find, that one has to look on all sides to find them." "Be quite easy, Madame Séraphin. If I hear of any one, I will inform you. Good places are as difficult to find as good subjects;" then she added, mentally, "very likely I'd send you a poor girl to be starved to death in your hovel! Your master is too miserly and too wicked—to denounce, in one breath, this poor Louise and poor M. Germain!" "I need not tell you," said Madame Séraphin, "how quiet our house is; a young girl gains much in getting with us, and this Louise must have been an incarnate 'mauvais sujet,' to have turned out so bad, notwithstanding all the good and holy advice M. Ferrand gave her."

"Certainly; then depend upon me: if I hear any one spoken of I think will answer, I will send them to you." "There is one thing more," said Madame Séraphin; "M. Ferrand will prefer that this servant should have no family, because, you comprehend, having no occasion to go out, she will run less risk; so, if by chance she could be found, monsieur would prefer an orphan, I suppose; in the first place, because it would be a good action, and then because, having no friends, she would have no pretext to go out. This miserable Louise is a good lesson for monsieur, allez, my poor Madame Pipelet! It is this that makes him so difficult in the choice of a domestic. Such a scandalous affair in a pious house like ours—how horrid! well, good-by; to-night, when I go to see M. Bradamanti, I'll call upon la Mère Burette." "Good-by, Madame Séraphin—you will certainly see him to-night." Madame Séraphin took her departure.

"Isn't she crazy after Bradamanti!" said Madame Pipelet. "What can she want with him? and he, wasn't he crazy for fear he should see her before he left for Normandy? I was afraid she wouldn't go, as M. Bradamanti expects the lady who came last night; I couldn't see her, but this time I'll try to unmask her—neither more nor less than I did with the lady who came to see the twopenny commandant. He has not had his foot here since! To teach him, I mean to burn his wood; yes, I will burn it, all your wood, disappointed coxcomb! get out! with your dirty twelve francs, and your glow-worm robe de chambre. That did you a great deal of good. But who can this lady be, of M. Bradamanti's? A lady or a common

woman! I'd like to know, for I am as curious as a magpie. It is not my fault—the bon Dieu made me so. It is my character. Ah, hold! an idea, and a famous one too—to find out her name! I'll try it. But who comes there? Ah! it is my prince of lodgers. Salute! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Madame Pipelet, putting herself in the attitude of *carry arms*, the back of her left hand to her periwig.

It was Rodolphe, as yet ignorant of the death of M. d'Harville. "Good-day, Madame Pipelet," said he on entering. "Mlle Rigolette, is she at home? I wish to speak to her." "She! poor little puss, is she not always at home! and her work, then! Does she ever take a holiday?" "And how is Morel's wife? does she cheer up any?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; many thanks to you or to the protector of whom you are the agent, she and her children are so happy now! They are like fish in water; they have fire, air, good beds, good food, a nurse to take care of them, without reckoning Mlle Rigolette, who, in working like a little beaver, and without appearing to, keeps them under her eye, allez! and besides, a negro doctor has been to see them. Eh! eh! eh! I say, Monsieur Rodolphe, I said to myself, 'Ah! but this is the doctor of the coalmen, this black man! he can feel their pulse without soiling his hands—but never mind, colour is nothing; he seems to be a first-rate—all the same!' He ordered a potion for Madame Morel, which relieved her at once." "Poor woman! she must be very sad." "Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, what would you? her husband mad, and then her Louise in prison. Do you see—her Louise—it is her heart's grief! for an honest family it is terrible; and when I think that just now la mère Séraphin came here to say such things about her. If I had not had a gudgeon to make her swallow, the Séraphin, she would not have got off in this way, but for a quarter of an hour I gave her fair words. Didn't she have the brass to come and ask me if I knew of any young body to take the place of Louise, at this beggar of a notary's? Ain't he close and miserly! Just imagine, they want an orphan, if she can be found. Do you know why, Monsieur Rodolphe? Because she would never want to go out. But that is not it—trash, a lie! The truth is, that they want to get hold of a young girl, who, having no one to advise her, they'll grind her out of her wages at their pleasure. Isn't it true?" "Yes, yes," answered Rodolphe, in a thoughtful manner. Learning that Madame Séraphin sought an orphan to take the place of Louise, Rodolphe foresaw in this circumstance a means, perhaps, certain of obtaining the punishment of the notary. While Madame Pipelet was speaking, he arranged in his mind the part Cecily had to play, as a principal instrument in the just punishment which he wished to inflict on the executioner of Louise Morel. "I was sure you would think as I did," said Madame Pipelet: "yes, I repeat it, and I would sooner die than to send any one to them. Am I not right, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Madame Pipelet, will you render me a great service?" "Dieu de Dieu! M. Rodolphe, do you wish me to throw myself across the fire, curl my periwig with boiling oil? or would you prefer I should bite some one? speak, I am wholly

yours, I and my heart—we are your slaves, except—"

"Make yourself easy, Madame Pipelet; this is not what I mean. I want a place for a young orphan. She is a stranger; she has never been at Paris, and I wish to send her to M. Ferrand's." "You suffocate me! How! in his barrack! to this old miser's!" "It is nevertheless a place. If the young girl should not like it, she can leave; but, at least, she will at once earn her living, and I shall be easy on her account."

"Marry! Monsieur Rodolphe, it's your affair; you are warned. If, notwithstanding, you find the place good, you are the master; and, besides, I must be just—speaking of the notary—if there's something against, there's also something for. He is as miserly as a dog, hard as an ass, bigoted as a sacristan, it is true; but he is as honest as one can be. He gives small wages, but he pays like a man. The food is bad. In fine, it is a house where one must work like a horse, but where there is no risk of a young girl's reputation. Louise was a chance!" "Madame Pipelet, I am going to confide a secret to your honour." "On the faith of Anastasia Pipelet, whose maiden name was Galimard, as true as there is a bon Dieu in heaven, and that Alfred wears only green coats, I shall be dumb as my dead aunt!"

"You must not say a word to M. Pipelet!" "I swear it on the head of my old darling! If the motive is honest—" "Ah! Madame Pipelet!" "It is between us—*life to death*, my prince of lodgers. Go on." "The young girl of whom I have spoken has committed a fault." "Understood! If I had not at fifteen married Alfred, I should have perhaps committed fifty—hundreds of faults! I, such as you see me. I was a real saltpetre unchained, *nom de nom*! Happily, Pipelet extinguished me in his virtue: without that I should have committed follies. It is to say to you that, if your young girl has only committed one fault, there is yet some hope." "I think so also. The young girl was a servant in Germany, at one of my relative's; the son of this relative has been the accomplice of the fault: you comprehend?"

"Al-l-l-l-l-l-!-lez donc! I comprehend—as if I had committed the fault!"

"The mother drove away the servant; but the young man was mad enough to leave his paternal home, and bring this poor girl to Paris."

"What would you have? These young folks—"

"After this came reflections—so much the wiser, as the money they had was all gone. My young relative called upon me; I consented to give him enough to return to his mother, but on condition that he should leave this girl here, and I would endeavour to place her."

"I could not have done better for my own son, if Pipelet had been pleased to grant me one." "I am enchanted with your approbation; only, as the young girl has no recommendations, and that she is a stranger, it is very difficult to find a place. If you would tell Madame Séraphin that one of your relations in Germany had addressed and recommended this young girl to you, and the notary would take her in his service, I should be doubly pleased. Cecily—this is her name—having been only led astray, would

be made correct, certainly, in a house so strict as that of the notary. It is for this reason I wish to see her enter the service of M. Ferrand. I need not tell you that, presented by you—a person so respectable—"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe—" "So estimable—" "Ah, my prince of lodgers—" "That this young girl, recommended by you, will be certainly accepted by Madame Séraphin, while presented by me—" "Understood! It is as if I presented a small young man! Ah! well! done; it suits me. Allez done! Stick the Séraphin! So much the better! I have a bone to pick with her. I will answer for the affair, Monsieur Rodolphe! I'll make her see stars at noon. I'll tell her that, for how long a time I don't know, I have a cousin established in Germany, one of the Galimards—my family name; that I have just received the news that she is defunct, her husband also; and that their daughter, who is now an orphan, will be on my hands immediately." "Very well. You will take Cecily yourself to M. Ferrand, without saying anything more to Madame Séraphin. As it is twenty years since you have seen your cousin, you will have nothing to answer except that, since her departure for Germany, you have received no news from her." "Ah, now! but if the young woman only jabbars German!"

"She speaks French perfectly; I will give her her lesson; all you have to do is to recommend her strongly to Madame Séraphin; or, rather, I think, no—for she would suspect, perhaps, that you wished to force her. You know it suffices often merely to ask for a thing that you are refused." "To whom do you tell this? That's the way I always served cajolers. If they had asked nothing, I do not say—" "This always happens. You must say; then, that Cecily is an orphan and a stranger, very young and very handsome; that she is going to be a heavy charge for you; that you feel but slight affection for her, as you had quarrelled with your cousin, and that you are not much obliged for such a present as she has made you."

"Dieu de Dieu! how cunning you are! But be easy—we two, we'll fix the pair. I say, Monsieur Rodolphe, how we understand each other—we two! When I think that if you had been of my age in the time when I was a real saltpetre—ma foi, I don't know—and you?" "Chut! if M. Pipelet—" "Ah! well, yes! poor dear man! You don't know a new infamy of this Cabrin! But I will tell you this directly. As to your young girl, be easy; I bet that I'll lead Séraphin to ask me to place my relation with them." "If you succeed, my dear Madame Pipelet, there is a hundred francs for you. I am not rich, but—" "Do you mock at me, Monsieur Rodolphe? Do you think I do this from interested feelings? Dieu de Dieu! it is pure friendship—a hundred francs." "But judge, then; that if I had this young girl for a long time under my charge, it would cost me more than this, at the end of some months."

"It is, then, to oblige you that I shall take the hundred francs, Monsieur Rodolphe; but it was a famous ticket in the lottery for us when you came to this house. I can cry from the roof, you are the prince of lodgers. Hollo! a hack! it is doubtless the little lady for M. Bradamanti. She came yesterday; I could not see her. I am

going to trifle with her, to make her show her face; without counting that I have invented a way to find out her name. You'll see me work; it will amuse you." "No, no, Madame Pipelet, the name and face of this lady is of no importance to me," said Rodolphe, retreating to the back part of the lodge.

"Madame!" cried Anastasia, rushing out before the lady, who entered, "where are you going, madame?" To M. Bradamanti's, said the female, visibly annoyed at thus being stopped in the passage. "He is not at home." "It is impossible; I have an appointment with him." "He is not at home." "You are mistaken." "I am not mistaken at all," trying all the time to catch a glimpse of her face. "M. Bradamanti has gone out, certainly gone out—very certainly gone out—that is to say, except for a lady." "Well! it is I! you annoy me; let me pass." "Your name, madame? I shall soon know if it is the person M. Bradamanti told me to pass in. If you have not that name, you must step over my body before you shall enter." "He told you my name!" cried the woman, with as much surprise as inquietude. "Yes, madame." "What imprudence!" murmured the young woman; then, after a moment's pause, she added impatiently, in a low voice, and as if she feared to be overheard, "Well! my name is Madame d'Orbigny."

At this name Rodolphe shuddered. It was the name of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. Instead of remaining in the shade, he advanced; and, by the light of the day and the lamp, he easily recognised this woman, from the description that Clémence had more than once given him. "Madame d'Orbigny!" repeated Madame Pipelet, "that's the name; you can go up, madame." The stepmother of Clémence passed rapidly before the lodge. "And al-lez donc!" cried the portière, in a triumphant manner; "gammoned the citizen! know her name—she is called D'Orbigny; the means not bad, hein, Monsieur Rodolphe? But what is the matter? You are quite pensive!" "This lady has been here before!" asked Rodolphe.

"Yes, last night; as soon as she was gone, M. Bradamanti went out, probably to take his place in the diligence for to-day; for on his return, last night, he begged me to go with his trunk to the office, as he could not depend upon the little devil Tertillard." "And where is M. Bradamanti going to? do you know?" "To Normandy—to Alençon." Rodolphe remembered that the estate of Aubiers, where M. d'Orbigny resided, was situated in Normandy. There could be no doubt the quack was going to see the father of Clémence for no good purpose!

"It is the departure of M. Bradamanti, which will finely provoke the Séraphin!" said Madame Pipelet. "She is like a mad wolf after M. César, who avoids her as much as he can; for he told me to conceal from her that he was going to leave to-night; thus, when she returns, she will find nobody at home! I'll profit by this to speak of your young woman. Apropos, how is she called—Cici?" "Cecily." "It is the same as if you said Cecily with an i at the end. All the same; I must put a piece of paper in my snuff box to remember this name—Cici—Casi—Cecily, good, I have it."

"Now I go to see Mademoiselle Rigolette," said Rodolphe; and, singularly preoccupied with the visit of Madame d'Orbigny to Polidori, he ascended to the fourth story.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST GRIEF OF RIGOLETTE.

THE chamber of Rigolette shone, as always, with the same coquettish nicety; the heavy silver watch, placed on the chimney, marked four o'clock; the very cold weather having passed, the economical workwoman had not put any fire in her stove. Hardly could one see from the window any part of the sky, the rough, the irregular mass of roofs, garrets, and high chimneys, which, on the other side of the street, formed the horizon.

Suddenly a ray of the sun, astray, as it were, glancing between two high roofs, came to light up, for some moments, with its purple tints, the windows of the young girl's chamber.

Rigolette was working, seated near the case-ment, sewing, with her feet on a tabouret placed before her. Thus, as some grand seigneur amuses himself sometimes, through caprice, in concealing the walls of a cottage by the most splendid draperies, for a moment the setting sun illuminated the little apartment with a thousand sparkling fires, cast its golden rays on the gray and green chints curtains, made the highly-polished furniture sparkle, the waxed floor to glisten like copper, and surrounded with gilded wire the bird-cage of the grisette.

But, alas! notwithstanding the provoking joyousness of this ray of the sun, the two canaries flew about with an inquiet air, and, contrary to custom, did not sing.

It was because, contrary to custom, also, Rigolette did not sing. None of the three warbled without the others. Almost always the fresh and maternal song of this one awoke the song of the others, who, more lazy, did not leave their nests at so early an hour. Then it was a defiance, a contest of clear, sonorous, brilliant, silvery notes, in which the birds did not always have the advantage.

Rigolette sang no more, because that, for the first time in her life, she experienced a sorrow.

Until then, the sight of the misery of the Morels had often afflicted her, but such scenes are too familiar to the poorer classes to make any durable impression.

After having each day assisted these unfortunates as much as was in her power, sincerely wept with them, and for them, the young girl felt at once affected and satisfied: affected with their misfortunes, and satisfied with her conduct towards them. But this was no sorrow.

Soon the natural gayety of character of Rigolette resumed its empire. And besides, without egotism, but from comparison, she found herself so happy in her little chamber, on leaving the horrible den of the Morels, that her ephemeral sadness was soon dissipated.

Before we inform the reader of the cause of the first grief of Rigolette, we wish to assure him completely as to the virtue of this young girl. We regret to use this word, virtue—a grave, pompous, and solemn word, which always

carries along with it ideas of a grievous sacrifice, of a painful contest with the passions, austere meditations on the end of things here below. Such was not the virtue of Rigolette. She had neither struggled nor meditated. She had worked, laughed and sung.

It depended, as she said to Rodolphe, on a question of time. She had not the leisure to be in love.

Before all, gay, industrious, managing; order, work, gayety, had, unknown to her, defended, sustained, saved her. Perhaps this morality will be found light, easy, and joyous; but what matters the cause, provided the effect subsists? What matters the direction of the roots, if the flower blooms brilliant and perfumed!

* * * * *

But let us descend from our utopian sphere, and return to the cause of Rigolette's first grief.

Except Germain, a good and serious young man, the neighbours of the grisette had taken, at first, her original familiarity, her offers of a good neighbourhood, for very significant encouragement; but these gentlemen had been obliged to acknowledge, with as much surprise as vexation, that they found in Rigolette an amiable and gay companion for their Sunday recreations, a kind neighbour and "bonne enfant," but nothing more. Their surprise and their vexation quailed by degrees to the frank and charming disposition of the grisette, and then, as she had judiciously told Rodolphe, her neighbours were proud on Sunday to have on their arm a pretty girl who did them honour (Rigolette cared little for appearances) and who only cost the partaking of their modest pleasures, which her presence and sprightliness enhanced. Besides, the dear girl was so easily contented; in the days of penury she dined so well and so gayly on a piece of hot cake, which she ate with all the force of her little white teeth; after which she amused herself so much with a walk on the boulevards or in the "passages!"

François Germain alone founded no foolish hopes on the familiarity of the young girl; either from penetration or delicacy of mind, he saw at once all that could be agreeable in the mode of living offered by Rigolette. That which, of course, would happen, happened. He became desperately in love with his neighbour, without daring to speak of this love. Far from imitating his predecessors, who, soon convinced of the vanity of their pursuits, had consoled themselves elsewhere, Germain had deliciously enjoyed his intimacy with the young girl, passing with her not only Sundays, but every evening that he was not occupied.

During these long hours, Rigolette had conducted herself, as always, lively and gay; Germain, tender, attentive, serious, and often a little melancholy. This sadness was the only inconvenience; for his manners, naturally "distingué," could not be compared to the ridiculous pretensions of M. Girandean, the travelling clerk, nor to the noisy eccentricities of Cabriou; but M. Girandean by his inexhaustible loquacity, and the painter by his hilarity not less so, had the advantage of Germain, whose gentle gravity awed a little his lively neighbour.

Rigolette had not, then, had, until now, any marked preference for either of her three lovers; but as she was not wanting in judgment,

she found that Germain alone united all the qualities necessary to make a reasonable woman happy.

These antecedents disposed of, we will say why Rigolette was sad, and why neither she nor her birds sang.

Her round and blooming face was rather pale; her large black eyes, ordinarily bright and sparkling, were cast down and dull; her expression showed unaccustomed fatigue. She had worked more than half the night. From time to time she regarded sadly a letter placed open upon a table beside her; this letter was from Germain, and contained what follows:

"Prison de la Conciergerie.

"**MADemoisELLE,**

"The place from whence I write will tell you the extent of my misfortune. I am incarcerated as a thief—I am criminal in the eyes of the world, though I dare to write to you! It would be frightful for me to think that you also looked upon me as a degraded and guilty being. I implore you, do not condemn me before having read this letter. If you cast me off, this last blow will overwhelm me quite! Here is what has taken place:

"For some time past I have not lived in the Rue du Temple, but I knew through poor Louise that the family Morel, for whom we were so much interested, were more and more wretched. Alas! my pity for these poor people has ruined me! I do not repent it, but my fate is a cruel one! Yesterday I remained quite late at M. Ferrand's, occupied with some pressing writings. In the room where I worked was a bureau; each day my patron locked up in it the work I had done. This night he appeared restless and agitated; he said to me, 'Do not go until these accounts are finished; you will place them in the bureau, of which I leave you the key,' and he went out.

"My work being finished, I opened the drawer to put it away; mechanically my eyes fell upon an open letter, where I read the name of *Jérôme Morel*, the artisan. I confess, seeing that it referred to his unfortunate man, I had the indiscretion to read this letter; I thus learned that the artisan was to be arrested the next morning for a note of thirteen hundred francs, at the suit of M. Ferrand, who, under an assumed name, would cause him to be imprisoned. This notice was from the agent of my patron. I knew the situation of the family well enough to foresee what a horrible blow this would be for them. I was as sorry as I was indignant. Unfortunately, I saw in the same drawer an open box containing some gold; there was about two thousand francs. At this moment I heard Louise on the staircase; without reflecting on the gravity of my action, profiting by the occasion which chance offered, I took thirteen hundred francs; I went into the passage and placed the money into the hand of Louise, telling her, 'Your father is to be arrested to-morrow at daylight for thirteen hundred francs; here they are; save him, but do not say you had this money from me. M. Ferrand is a bad man.'

"You see, mademoiselle, my intention was good, though my conduct was culpable; I conceal nothing. Now hear my excuse.

"For a long time, by economy, I have saved and placed at a banker's the small sum of fifteen

hundred francs. About a week ago, he notified me that, the term of his obligation towards me being arrived, he held my funds subject to my order, if I did not wish them to remain with him.

"I thus possessed more than I took from the notary. I could the next day replace it; but the cashier of the banker did not reach his office before twelve o'clock, and at daybreak they were to arrest poor Morel. It was necessary, then, to place him in a situation to pay, otherwise, even if I were to go and take him from prison, the arrest might have already killed his wife; besides, the very considerable expenses attending this would have been at the cost of the artisan. You comprehend, that all these misfortunes would not have happened, if I could have returned the thirteen hundred francs before M. Ferrand discovered their loss.

"I left the house no longer under the impression of indignation and pity which had made me act in this manner. I reflected on all the dangers of my position; a thousand fears assailed me. I knew the severity of the notary; he could, after my departure, return and go to the bureau, find out the *theft*: for in his eyes, to the eyes of everybody, it is a theft.

"These ideas quite upset me: although it was late, I ran to the banker's to beg him to return my money instantly. I should have explained this extraordinary demand, afterward I would have returned to M. Ferrand and replaced the money I had taken.

"The banker, by a fatal chance, had been for two days at Belleville, at his country house; I awaited the daylight with increasing agony; at length I arrived at Belleville. Everything seemed leagued against me; the banker had left for Paris; I flew back, I got my money, I went to M. Ferrand's—all was discovered!

"But this is only a part of my misfortunes: now the notary accuses me of having stolen fifteen thousand francs in notes, which were, he said, in the drawer with the two thousand francs in gold. It is a false accusation, an in famous lie! I avow myself guilty of the first charge, but by all that is sacred, I swear to you, mademoiselle, that I am innocent of the second. I have seen no bills in the drawer; there was only the gold, as I said before.

"Such is the truth, mademoiselle; I am under the charge of an overwhelming accusation, and yet I affirm that you ought to think me incapable of telling a falsehood. But will you believe me? Alas! as M. Ferrand told me, he who has stolen a small sum can easily steal a large one, and his words deserve no confidence.

"I have always found you so good and devoted to the unfortunate, mademoiselle, I know you are so faithful and frank, that your heart will guide you, I hope, in the appreciation of the truth—I ask nothing more. Give faith to my words, and you will find me as much to be pitied as blamed; for I repeat, my intention was good; circumstances impossible to foresee have ruined me.

"Ah! Mademoiselle Rigolette, I am very unhappy! If you knew what kind of people I am destined to live among until the day of my trial! Yesterday they took me to a place which is called the *dépôt* of the Prefecture of Police. I cannot tell you what I experienced when, after having mounted a gloomy staircase, I arri-

ved before a door with an iron wicket, which they opened, and then was soon closed upon me. I was so much troubled, that at first I could distinguish nothing. A hot, disagreeable air struck me in the face; I heard a great noise of voices mingled with sinister laughs, accents of rage, and common songs; I held myself immovable near the door, looking at the stone flaggings, daring neither to advance nor raise my eyes, believing that every one was looking at me. They did not trouble themselves about me: one prisoner more or less is of no consequence to them; at length I raised my head. What horrible figures, mon Dieu! how many clothed in rags! how many ragged clothes soiled with mud! All the externals of vice and misery. There are about forty or fifty, seated, standing, or lying on benches fast to the walls; vagabonds, robbers, assassins, in fine, all those who had been arrested that night or day.

"When they perceived me, I found a sad consolation in seeing that they did not recognise me as one of their fellows. Some of them looked at me with an insolent and jeering air; then they began to talk among themselves, in a low tone, and in a hideous language I did not comprehend. At the end of a short time, the most audacious of them came and struck me on the shoulder, and asked me for some money to pay my welcome.

"I gave them some money, in hopes to purchase repose: it was not enough; they required more; I refused. Then several of them surrounded me loading me with threats and insults; they were about to throw themselves upon me, when happily, attracted by the noise, a keeper entered; I complained to him; he made them give up the money I had given them, and told me that, if I wished, I should be for a small amount conducted to what they call *la pistole*; that is to say, I could be put alone in a cell. I accepted with gratitude, and left these bandits in the midst of their threats for the future. The keeper placed me in a cell, where I passed the rest of the night. It is from hence that I write you this morning, Mademoiselle Rigolette; immediately after my examination, I shall be conducted to another prison, which is called *La Force*, where I fear I shall meet many of my companions of the *Dépot*. The keeper, interested by my grief and by my tears, has promised me to send you this letter, although it is strictly forbidden. I expect, Mademoiselle Rigolette, a last service of your old friendship, if now you should not blush at this friendship.

"If you are willing to grant my demand, here it is.

"You will receive with this a small key and a line for the porter of the house where I reside, Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. I inform him that you can dispose of all that belongs to me, and that he must obey your orders. He will show you my room. You will have the kindness to open my secretary with the key I send you; you will find a large envelope covering many papers, which I wish you to take care of; one of them was destined for you, as you will see by the address; others have been written concerning you, in our happy days. Do not be angry—you never would have known it.

"I beg you also to take the small sum of

money which is in this secretary, also a 'sack-et' of satin, enclosing a little cravat of orange silk, that you wore on our last Sunday walk, and that you gave me the day I left the Rue du Temple. I wish, in fine, that, with the exception of some linen, which you will send to *La Force*, you would sell the furniture and effects I possess: acquitted or condemned, I shall not be the less ruined and obliged to leave Paris. Where shall I go! What are my resources? God knows!

"Madame Bouvard, the 'marchande' in the Temple, who has already sold and bought for me, will doubtless arrange all this; she's an honest woman; this arrangement will spare you much embarrassment, for I know how precious your time is.

"I have paid my rent in advance; I beg you, then, to give a small gratuity to the porter. Pardon me, mademoiselle, for imposing on you with these details, but you are the only person in the world to whom I dare and can address myself.

"I might have asked this service from one of the clerks at M. Ferrand's, but I feared his discretion respecting sundry papers; many of them concern you, as I have already told you; others have reference to some sad events of my life.

"Ah! believe me, Mademoiselle Rigolette, if you grant it, this last proof of your former affection will be my sole consolation in the great trouble which crushes me; in spite of myself, I hope you will not refuse me.

"I ask, also, permission to write you sometimes—it will be so soothing, so precious, to be able to pour out, to disclose to a benevolent heart, the sorrows which overwhelm me.

"Alas! I am alone in the world; no one feels any interest in me. This isolated condition was always painful—judge now!

"And yet, I am honest; and I have the consciousness of never having injured any one; of having always, even at the peril of my life, shown my aversion for evil, as you will see by the papers, which I beg you to keep, and which you can read. But when I say this, who will believe me. M. Ferrand is respected by everybody; his reputation is well established; he will crush me; I resign myself, in advance, to my fate.

"In fine, Mademoiselle Rigolette, if you believe me, you will not have, I hope, any contempt for me; you will pity me, and you will sometimes think of a sincere friend; then, if I cause you much—much pity, perhaps you will push your generosity so far as to come, some day—a Sunday (alas! what recollections does this word awaken)—to *brave* the 'parloir' of my prison.

"But no, no! to see you in such a place—I never can dare. Yet you are so kind—that—

"I am obliged to stop, and send you this, with the key and the note to the porter, which I shall write in haste, as the keeper has come to tell me I am to be taken before the judge. Adieu, adieu, Mademoiselle Rigolette. Do not cast me off. I have no hope but in you—in you alone!

"FRANÇOIS GERMAIN.

"P. S. If you answer, address your letter to the prison of *La Force*."

The reader can now comprehend the cause of the first grief of La Rigolette. Her excellent heart was profoundly affected at a calamity of which she had not had until then any suspicion. She believed implicitly in the entire veracity of the story of Germain, the unfortunate son of the Maître d'Ecole. Not very severe, she even found that her old neighbour enormously exaggerated his fault. To save an unfortunate father, he had taken the money, which he knew he could return. This action, in the eyes of the grisette, was only generous.

By one of those inconsistencies natural to women, and, above all, to those of her class, this young girl, who until then had felt for Germain, as for her other neighbours, a joyous and cordial friendship, now acknowledged a decided preference.

As soon as she knew he was unfortunate, unjustly accused, and a prisoner, she thought no more of his rivals.

With Rigolette it was not yet love; it was a lively, sincere affection, filled with commiseration and resolute devotion: a very new sentiment for her, from the bitterness which was joined to it. Such was the situation *morale* of Rigolette, when Rodolphe entered her room, after having discreetly knocked at the door.

CHAPTER XVI.

FRIENDSHIP.

"Good-day, my neighbour," said Rodolphe; "I hope I do not disturb you?" "No, my neighbour; I am, on the contrary, very glad to see you, for I have much sorrow!" "Why, I do find you pale; you seem to have been weeping!"

"I think I have wept! There is reason for it. Poor Germain! Here, read;" and Rigolette handed to Rodolphe the letter of the prisoner. "If this is not enough to break one's heart! You told me you were interested in him. Now is the time to show it," added she, while Rodolphe read attentively. "Must it be that this villain, M. Ferrand, is thirsting for the blood of everybody! First it was Louise, now it is Germain. Oh! I am not cruel; but if some misfortune should happen to this notary I should be content! To accuse such an honest young man of having stolen 1300 francs! Germain—him!—truth and honesty itself, and then so regular, so mild, so sad—is he not to be pitied, mon Dieu! among all these scoundrels—in his prison! Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, from to-day I begin to see that all is not 'couleur de rose' in life!" "And what do you mean to do, my neighbour?" "What I mean to do; why, everything he asks, and that as soon as possible. I should have already been off, but for this work which I must finish, and which I am going to take to the Rue Saint Honoré, as I go to Germain's room to get the papers he speaks of. I have passed a part of the night in working, so as to gain some hours in advance. I am going to have so many things to do, besides my work, that I must get in readiness. In the first place, Madame Morel wishes me to see Louise in her prison. It is, perhaps, very difficult, but I will

try. Unfortunately, I do not know who to address myself to." "I have thought of that." "You, my neighbour!" "Here is a permission." "What happiness! Can you not get me one also for the prison of this unfortunate Germain! It will give him so much pleasure!" "I will give you, also, the means to see Germain." "Oh, thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe." "You are not afraid, then, to go to his prison!" "Very certain, my heart will beat the first time. But never mind. When Germain was happy, did I not always find him ready to anticipate all my wishes? To take me to the theatre, or a walk! to read to me at night! to assist me in arranging my flowers! to wax my floor! Well! he is in trouble—now it is my turn; a poor little mouse like me can't do much; I know it; but all I can do I will do—he can count on it; he shall see if I am a good friend! Hold, Monsieur Rodolphe, there is one thing that vexes me; it is his suspicion—to believe me capable of despising him! I! I ask you why? This old miser of a notary accuses him of theft; what is that to me? I know it is not true. The letter of Germain, does it not prove, as clear as day, that he is innocent, who I should never have thought guilty! it was only to see him, to know him, to be sure that he is incapable of a wrong action. One must be as wicked as M. Ferrand to maintain such false assertions." "Bravo, my neighbour. I like your indignation!" "Oh! stop—I wish I was a man, to go see this notary, and say to him, 'Ah! you maintain that Germain has robbed you; well, look here, take that! old liar, he won't steal this from you! And pau! pau! pau! I'd beat him to a mummy.'" "You'd have very expeditious justice," said Rodolphe, smiling at the animation of Rigolette. "It is so revolting; and, as Germain says in his letter, everybody will take the part of his patron against him, because his patron is rich, and thought much of, while Germain is a poor young man without protection; unless you come to his assistance, Monsieur Rodolphe, you, who know so many benevolent persons. Can nothing be done?" "He must wait for his trial. Once acquitted, as I think he will be, numerous proofs of interest will be shown him, I assure you. But listen, my neighbour, I know from experience that I can count on your discretion."

"Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. I have never been a babbler."

"Well! no one must know, even Germain himself must be ignorant, that he has friends who are watching over him, for he has friends." "Really?" "Very powerful, and very devoted." "It would give him so much courage to know it!" "Doubtless; but perhaps he could not keep the secret. Then, Mr. Ferrand, alarmed, would be on his guard, his suspicions aroused; and as he is very cunning, he would make it difficult to get at him; which would be lamentable, for not only must the innocence of Germain be proved, but his calumniator unmasked."

"I understand you, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Just so with Louise; I bring you this permission to see her, so that you can tell her not to speak to any one of what she has revealed to me. She will know what this means." "That is sufficient, M. Rodolphe." "In a word, that

I, please, be careful not to complain in her prison of the conduct of her master, it is very important. But, she must conceal nothing from the lawyer who will be sent by me to prepare for her defence; recommend all this to her."

"Be quite easy, my neighbour—I will forget nothing. I have a good memory. But I speak of kindness! it is you who are good and generous! Any one in trouble, you are there at once!"

"I have told you, my neighbour, I am only a poor clerk; when, in roving about, I find good people who deserve protection, I inform a benevolent person who has all confidence in me, and they are assisted. And where do you lodge, now that you have given up your room to the Morels?" "I lodge—in furnished lodgings." "Oh! how I detect that. To be where everybody else has been—it is as if everybody had been in your own room." "I am only there at night, and then—" "I conceive—it is less disagreeable. My home, Monsieur Rodolphe, rendered me so happy; I had arranged a life so tranquil, that I should not have believed it possible to have as sorrow. Yet you see! No, I cannot tell you what a blow the misfortune of Germain has caused me. I have seen the Morels and others—much to be pitied, it is true; but misery is misery; among poor folks they expect it; it does not surprise them, and they help one another as they can. But to see a poor young man, honest and good, who has been your friend for a long time, to see him accused of theft, and imprisoned pell-mell with rogues and cut-throats! Ah! dame, Monsieur Rodolphe, it is true, I have no strength against this; it is a misfortune I have never thought of; it upsets me."

And the large eyes of Rigolette filled with tears.

"Courage, courage! your gaiety will return when your friend is acquitted." "Oh! he must be acquitted. They will only have to read to the judges the letter which he has written me—that will be enough, will it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "In reality, this simple and touching letter has all the marks of truth; you must let me take a copy; it will be useful in his defence."

"Certainly, Monsieur Rodolphe. If I did not write like a real cat, in spite of the lessons Germain gave me, I should propose to copy it for you; but my writing is so coarse, so crooked, and, besides, there are so many—so many faults!"

"I only ask you to lend me this letter until to-morrow."

"There it is, my neighbour; but you will take good care of it! I have burned all the billets-doux which M. Cabrion and M. Girardeau wrote me at the commencement of our acquaintance, with bleeding hearts and doves on the top of the paper; but this poor letter of Germain, I will take good care of it, and the others also, if he writes them. For, in truth, Monsieur Rodolphe, it is a proof in my favour, that he asks these little services."

"Without doubt it proves that you are the best little friend that one can have. But, I reflect—instead of going by-and-by alone to M. Germain's, shall I accompany you?" "With pleasure, my neighbour. The night approaches,

and I prefer not to be alone in the streets after dark, especially as I have to go near the Palais Royal. But, to go so far, it will be tiresome and fatiguing to you, perhaps?" "Not at all; we will take a hack." "Really! oh! how it will amuse me to go in a carriage, if I had not so much sorrow. And I must have sorrow, for this is the first day since I lived here that I have not sung. My birds are all astonished. Poor little things! they do not know what it means; two or three times *Papa Crétu* has sung a little to entice me; I wished to amuse him—ah, well, yes! after a moment I began to weep; *Ramonette* then cried, but I could answer no more."

"What singular names you have given your birds! *Papa Crétu*! *Ramonette*?" "Dame!" Monsieur Rodolphe, my birds are the joy of my solitude; they are my best friends; I have given them the name of the good people who were the joy of my childhood, and who have been also my best friends; without reckoning, to finish the resemblance, that *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette* were as gay and tuneful as the birds of heaven."

"Ah, now! yes, I recollect—your adopted parents were thus called." "Yes, my neighbour, these are ridiculous names for birds—I know it, but it only concerns me. Now, it was on this very subject that I saw Germain had a good heart." "He had then?" "Certainly: M. Girondeau and M. Cabrion, M. Cabrion above all, were forever making jokes on the names of my birds: 'To call a canary *Papa Crétu*, did you ever! M. Cabrion never finished, and then he would laugh—such laughs!! 'If it were a cock,' said he, 'very well, you might call it *Crétu* (comb). It is the same with the other one; *Ramonette* sounds too much like *Ramew* (chimney-sweep). At length he made me so angry that I would not go out with him for two Sundays, just to teach him; and I told him, very seriously, that if he recommenced his jokes, which were unpleasant to me, we should never go out together again.'" "What a courageous resolution!"

"It cost me a good deal,—ah, Monsieur Rodolphe—I, who looked for my Sunday excursions like—I had a sorrowful heart, I tell you—to remain home all alone of a fine day; but never mind, I preferred rather to sacrifice my Sunday than to continue to hear M. Cabrion make fun of what I respected. Except for this, and the ideas attached to it, I would have preferred to give other names to my birds. There is, above all, one name I should have loved to adoration—that of *Colibri* (humming-bird). Well! I cannot do it, because that never shall. I call my birds otherwise than *Crétu* and *Ramonette*; it would seem to me that I sacrificed them, that I forgot my kind adopted parents; is it not so, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "You are right—a thousand times right—and Germain did not make fun of these names!"

"On the contrary, only the first time, it appeared droll to him, as to every one else—it is very simple; but, when I explained my reasons, as I had explained them to M. Cabrion, the tears came into his eyes. From that day I said, 'M. Germain has a kind heart; he has nothing against him but his sadness.' And do you see, Monsieur Rodolphe, that he has brought me misfortune to reproach him for his sadness. Then I did not comprehend how one could be sad."

"Now I comprehend it but too well. But now my work is finished, will you give me my shawl, my neighbour? it is not cold enough for a cloak, is it?"

"We shall go in a carriage, and I will bring you back."

"It is true, we shall go and return quicker; it will be so much time gained." "But, on reflection, how are you going to manage? your work will suffer from your visit to the prisons?"

"Oh no! no! I have laid my plans. In the first place, I have my Sundays; I will go and see Louise and Germain on these days—it will serve me for a walk and recreation; then, in the week, I shall go to the prison once or twice; each time will cost me three good hours, will it not? Well, to make up for this, I will work one hour more each day, and I will go to bed at twelve o'clock instead of eleven; that will give me a clear gain of seven or eight hours each week, which I can use in going to see Louise and Germain. You see, I am richer than I appear to be," added Rigolette, smiling. "And do you not fear this will fatigue you?" "Bah! I can do it; one can do anything; and, besides, it will not last forever." "Here is your shawl, my neighbour. I shall not be so indiscreet as yesterday—I shall not bring my lips too close to this charming neck." "Ah, my neighbour! yesterday was yesterday—one could laugh; but to-day is different—take care, you prick me!"

"Come! the pin is crooked." "Well, take another; there, on the pincushion. Ah! I forget; will you do me a favour, my neighbour?" "Command, my neighbour." "Make me a good pen, very coarse, so that I can, on my return, write to this poor Germain that his commissions are executed. He shall have my letter to-morrow morning early." "And where are your pens?" "There, on the table; the knife is in the drawer. Stop, I am going to light my candle, for it grows quite dark."

"I shall want it to mend the pen." "And, besides, I can't see to tie my bonnet." Rigolette took a match and lit an end of candle which was in a very shining candlestick.

"Diable! wax candle, my neighbour—what luxury!"

"For all I burn, it cost me a trifle more than a tallow candle, and it is so much neater." "Not much dearer!"

"Mon Dieu! no. I buy these ends of candles by the pound, and a half pound serves me a month." "But," said Rodolphe, mending the pen carefully, while the grisette tied her bonnet before the glass, "I see no preparations for your dinner!"

"I haven't a shadow of hunger. I took a cup of milk this morning: I will take another to-night, with a little bread; I shall have enough."

"Will you not come and eat dinner with me, when we come away from Germain's?"

"I thank you, my neighbour, I have the heart too full; another time, with pleasure. What do you say to the evening of the day that poor Germain comes out of prison? I invite myself, and afterward we will go to the play. Is it said?"

"It is said, my neighbour; I assure you that I shall not forget this engagement. But to-day—you refuse me?" "Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, I should be too stupid to-day; besides,

it would take up too much time. Only think—it is now, if ever, that I must not be lazy."

"Come, I give up this pleasure, for to-day."

"Here, take my bundle, my neighbour; go before, I will shut the door."

"Here is an excellent pen—now, your bundle."

"Take care you don't tumble it—it is 'petit de soie'—it shows the ribs—hold it in your hand—in this way—lightly—well, pass on, I will light you." And Rodolphe descended, preceded by Rigolette. As they passed the lodge, they saw M. Pipelet, who, with his arms hanging down, advanced towards them from the bottom of the allée; in one hand he held the sign, which announced to the public that he would make "commerce d'amitié" with Cabri- on; and in the other, the portrait of the infernal painter.

The despair of Alfred was so overwhelming, that his chin rested on his breast, and nothing could be seen but the top of his "chapeau tromblon." On seeing him approach them, with his head down, towards Rodolphe and Rigolette, one would have said it was a goat, or a brave "breton champion" preparing for combat. Anastasia soon appeared on the threshold, and cried, at the sight of her husband, "Well! old darling! here you are, hey! what did the commissary say to you? Alfred! but pay attention, now, you are going to poke yourself against my prince of lodgers—who has stolen your eyes! Pardon! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is this beggar of a Cabri- on who stupefies him more and more—he certainly will make him turn to a jackass—the 'vieuse cheri'! Alfred! but, answer, then!" At this voice, so dear to his heart, M. Pipelet raised his head: his features were imprinted with a melancholy bitterness. "What did the commissary say to you?" repeated Anastasia. "Anastasia, you must collect the little that we possess, clasp our friends in our arms, pack our trunks, and expatriate ourselves from France—from my 'belle France!' for, sure now of impunity, the monster is capable of pursuing me everywhere." "How! the commissary?"

"The commissary!" cried M. Pipelet, with savage indignation; "the commissary! he laughed in my face."

"Your face! an aged man, who has so respectable an air, that you'd look as stupid as a goose, if one did not know your virtues!"

"Well! notwithstanding that, when I had respectfully deposed before him my heap of complaints and griefs against this infernal Cabri- on, this magistrate, after having looked at, laughing—yes, laughing—and I dare to say it—laughing indecently—the sign and the portrait, which I produced as justificatory of my complaint, this magistrate replied, 'My good man, this Cabri- on is a funny fellow; he is a "farceur";" pay no attention to his jokes. I advise you, now, in a friendly manner, to laugh at them, for really there is cause!' 'To laugh! monsieur,' cried I, 'to laugh! but grief is devouring one—they imbitter my existence, those scoundrels—they peester me—they will cause me to lose my reason—I demand that they be locked up, that they be exiled, at least, from my street.' At these words the commissary smiled, and obligingly showed me the door. I

understood this gesture of the magistrate, and there I am." "Magistrate of nothing at all!" cried Madame Pipelet. "All is finished! Anastasia, all is finished! No more hope! There is no longer any justice in France! I am atrociously sacrificed!" and, by way of peroration, M. Pipelet threw, with all his strength, the portrait and sign to the end of the alley. Rodolphe and Rigolette had, in the obscurity, slightly smiled at the despair of M. Pipelet. After having addressed some words of consolation to Alfred, whom Anastasia was calming in the best way she could, the prince of lodgers left the house of the Rue du Temple with Rigolette, and got into a carriage to go to the residence of François Germain.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WILL.

FRANÇOIS Germain lived on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11. We will recall to the reader that which he has doubtless forgotten, that Madame Mathieu, the diamond broker of whom we have spoken, lived in the same house as Germain. During the long ride from the Rue du Temple to the Rue Saint Honoré, where the woman lived who furnished Rigolette with work, Rodolphe was able to appreciate still more the excellent feelings of the young girl. Like all characters instinctively good and devoted, she was not conscious of the delicacy, the generosity of her conduct, which seemed to her quite natural.

Nothing had been easier for Rodolphe than to have made a liberal provision for Rigolette, as well for her present wants as the future, so that she could have gone charitably to console Louise and Germain, without counting the time she lost in these visits from her work, her only resource; but the prince feared to weaken the merit of the grisette's devotion in rendering it too easy; quite decided to recompense the rare and charming qualities which he had discovered in her, he wished to follow her to the end of this new and interesting trial. At the end of an hour, the carriage, on its return from the Rue Saint Honoré, stopped on the Boulevard Saint Denis, No. 11, before a house of modest appearance.

Rodolphe assisted Rigolette to alight: she entered the porter's lodge, and communicated to him the intentions of Germain, without forgetting the promised gratuity. From his amenity of disposition, the son of the Maître d'Ecole was everywhere loved. The confreres of M. Pipelet was much concerned to learn that the house should lose so honest and quiet a lodger: such were his expressions. The grisette, furnished with a light, rejoined her companion; the porter was to follow, after a little while, to receive instructions. The chamber of Germain was on the fourth story. On arriving at the door, Rigolette said to Rodolphe, giving him the key, "Here, my neighbour, open—my hand trembles too much. You will laugh at me; but, in thinking that poor Germain will never return here, it seems to me I am about to enter in the chamber of the dead." "Come, be reasonable, now, my neighbour—have no such

ideas!" "I was wrong, but it was stronger than I," and she wiped away a tear. Without being as much moved as his companion, Rodolphe, nevertheless, experienced a painful impression on entering this modest apartment.

Knowing how he had been pursued, and, perhaps, still pursued by the accomplices of the Maître d'Ecole, he knew that this unfortunate young man must have passed many sad hours in this solitude. Rigolette placed the light on a table. Nothing could be more plain than the furniture of this sleeping-room, composed of a bed, a commode, a secretary of black walnut, four straw-bottomed chairs, and a table; white cotton curtains covered the windows and the alcove; the only ornaments on the mantelpiece were a decanter and a glass. From the appearance of the bed, which was made, it could be seen that Germain had thrown himself upon it without taking off his clothes the night preceding his arrest.

"Poor fellow!" said Rigolette, sadly, examining, with interest, the interior of the chamber; "it is easily to be seen that he no longer has me for a neighbour. It is in order, but not neat; there is dust everywhere, the curtains are smoked, the windows are dirty, the floor is not washed. Ah! what a difference! Rue du Temple, it was not handsome, but it was more gay, because everything shone with neatness, like in my own room." "It was because you were there, to give your advice." "But see, now," cried Rigolette, showing the beds, "he did not go to rest the other night, so much was he disturbed. Look here! this handkerchief, which he has left, has been steeped in tears. That is plain to be seen;" and she took it, adding, "Germain has kept a little orange-silk cravat of mine, which I gave him when we were happy; I am sure he will not be angry." "On the contrary, he will be very happy at this proof of your affection." "Now let us think of serious matters: I will make a package of linen, which I shall find in the commode; to take to him in prison; La Mère Bouvard, who I shall send here to-morrow, will manage the rest. First, however, I'll open the secretary and take out the papers and money which M. Germain begged me keep for him." "But, while I think of it," said Rodolphe, "Louise Morel gave me, yesterday, the 1300 francs in gold, which Germain had given her to pay the debt of her father, but which I had already done; I have this money; it belongs to Germain, since he has paid back the notary; I will give it to you; you can add it to the rest." "As you please, Monsieur Rodolphe; yet, I would rather not have so large a sum with me at home, there are so many robbers nowadays. Papers are very well—there is nothing to fear; but money—it is dangerous." "Perhaps you are right, my neighbour; shall I take charge of this sum? If Germain has need of anything, you must let me know at once. I will leave you my address, and I will send you what he wants."

"I should not have dared to ask this service from you; it will be much better, my neighbour. I will give you also the money I shall receive from the sale of his effects. Let us see these papers," said the young girl, opening the secretary and several drawers. "Ah! it is probably this. Here is a large envelope. Ah!

mon Dieu! look here, Monsieur Rodolphe, how sad it is what is written on this." And she read, in a faltering tone,

"In the case I should die of a violent death, or otherwise; I beg the person who should open this secretary to carry these papers to Mademoiselle Rigolette, sempstress, Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Can I break the seal, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Doubtless; does he not say that among these papers there is one particularly addressed to you?" The young girl broke the seal. Several papers were enclosed; one of them, bearing the superscription, "*To Mademoiselle Rigolette*," contained these words: "Mademoiselle—When you read this letter, I shall no longer exist. If, as I fear, I die a violent death, in falling a victim to a wilful murder, some information, under the title of *Notes on my Life*, may give a clue to my assassins." "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Rigolette, "I am no longer astonished that he was so sad. Poor Germain! always to be pursued by such ideas!"

"Yes; he must have been much afflicted. But his worst days are over, believe me." "Alas! I hope so, Monsieur Rodolphe. But, however, to be in prison—accused of robbery." "Be comforted. Once his innocence recognised, instead of falling into an isolated state, he will find friends. You, in the first place; then a beloved mother, from whom he has been separated since his childhood." "His mother! He has still a mother?" "Yes. She thinks him lost to her. Judge of her joy when she will see him again. Do not speak to him of his mother. I confide this secret to you, because you interest yourself so generously in his favour." "I thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe; you may be assured I will keep your secret." And Rigolette continued the reading of his letter:

"If you will, mademoiselle, look over these notes, you will see that I have been all my life very unhappy, except during the time I passed with you. That which I should never have dared to tell you, you will find written in a kind of *memento*, entitled "*My sole days of happiness*."

"Almost every evening, on leaving you, I thus poured out the consoling thoughts that your affection inspired, and which alone tempered the bitterness of my life. That which was friendship when with you, became love when absent from you. I have concealed this until this moment when I shall be no more for you than perhaps a "*triste souvenir*." My destiny was so unhappy, that I should never have spoken to you of this sentiment; although sincere and profound, it would only have made you unhappy."

"One wish alone remains to be fulfilled, and I hope that you will accomplish it. I have seen with what admirable courage you work, and how much method and economy was necessary for you to live on the small amount you earn so industriously. Often, without telling you, I have trembled in thinking that a malady, caused, perhaps, by excess of labour, might reduce you to a situation so frightful that I could not even think of it without alarm. It is very grateful to me to think that I can at least spare you the horrors, and, perhaps, in a great degree, the miseries, which you, in the thoughtlessness of youth, do not foresee, happily."

"What does he mean, Monsieur Rodolphe?" said Rigolette, astonished. "Continue; we shall see." "I know on how little you can live, and what a resource the smallest sum would be to you in a time of difficulty. I am very poor, but, by economy, I have set aside 1500 francs, deposited at a banker's; it is all that I possess. By my will, which you will find here, I bequeath it to you; accept it from a friend, a good brother, who is no more." "Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe," said Rigolette, bursting into tears, and giving the letter to the prince, "this gives me too much pain. Good Germain, thus to think of me! Ah! what a heart! mon Dieu! what an excellent heart!" "Worthy and good young man!" replied Rodolphe, with emotion. "But calm yourself, my child. 'Dieu merci,' Germain is not dead; this anticipated, will at least serve as a witness of his love for you."

* * * * *

"It is true. To be beloved by so good a young man, is very flattering, is it not, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"And some day, perhaps, you will participate in this love?"

"Dame! Monsieur Rodolphe, it is very trying; this poor Germain is so much to be pitied! I'll put myself in his place—if at the moment when I thought myself abandoned, despised by all the world, a person, a good friend, came to me, still more kind than I could hope for—I should be so happy!" After a moment's pause, Rigolette resumed with a sigh, "On the other hand, we are both so poor, that perhaps it would not be reasonable. Look here, Monsieur Rodolphe, I do not wish to think of that; perhaps I am mistaken; what is sure is, that I will do all I can for Germain, as long as he remains in prison. Once free, it will always be time enough to see if it is love or friendship I feel for him; then if it is love—what would you, my neighbour! it will be love. But it grows late, Monsieur Rodolphe; will you collect these papers, while I make up a bundle of linen? Ah! I forget the '*sachet*' enclosing the little orange cravat, which I have given him. It is in this drawer, without a doubt. Oh! see how pretty it is, this '*sachet*,' and all embroidered! Poor Germain! he has guarded it like a relic! I well remember the last time I wore it, and when I gave it to him. He was so happy, so happy."

At this moment some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Rodolphe.

"I want to speak to Madame Mathieu," answered a hoarse and husky voice, with an accent which denoted the speaker to be one of the lowest order. (Madame Mathieu was the diamond broker of whom we have spoken.)

This voice, singularly accented, awakened some vague recollections in the mind of Rodolphe. Wishing to enlighten them, he went and opened the door. He found himself face to face with one of the "*habitués*" of the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, whom he recognised at once, so fully and plainly was the stamp of crime, marked on this youthful and besetted face—it was *Barbillion*.

Barbillion, the mock coachman of the back, which had conveyed the *Maitre d'Ecole* and La

Chouette to the "chemin creux" of Bouqueval; Barbillion, the murderer of the husband of the milkwoman, who committed such an outrage on the Goualeuse at the farm of Arnouville.

Either this wretch had forgotten the features of Rodolphe, whom he had seen only once at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, or the change of dress prevented him from recognising the conqueror of the Chourineur; he manifested no astonishment at his appearance. "What do you want?" said Rodolphe. "Here is a letter for Madame Mathieu. I must give it into her own hands," answered Barbillion.

"She does not live here: inquire opposite," said Rodolphe.

"Thank you, bourgeois; they told me it was the door to the left; I am mistaken." Rodolphe did not recollect the name of the diamond broker; he had therefore no motive to interest himself about the woman to whom Barbillion came as a messenger. Nevertheless, although he was ignorant of the crimes of this bandit, his face had such a guilty look of perversity, that he remained on the threshold of the door, curious to see the person to whom Barbillion brought this letter. Hardly had Barbillion knocked at the opposite door when it was opened, and the broker, a large woman of about fifty years of age, appeared, holding a candle in her hand.

"Madame Mathieu?" said Barbillion.

"That's my name."

"Here is a letter; I want an answer," said Barbillion made a step in advance, as if to enter the room; but she made a motion for him not to advance, unsealed the letter, read it, and answered with a satisfied air, "You will say it is good, mon garçon; I will bring what they wish; I will go to-morrow at the same time as before. Give my compliments to this lady."

"Yes, my bourgeoisie. Don't forget the messenger."

"Go ask those who sent you; they are richer than I am," and she closed her door. Rodolphe re-entered Germain's room, seeing Barbillion rapidly descending the staircase.

The brigand met on the boulevard a man of a villanous and ferocious appearance, who waited for him before a shop. Although several persons might have heard him, but not understood him, it is true, Barbillion appeared so much pleased that he could not restrain from saying to his companion; "Come, *'pitancher l'eau d'aff'* (drink some brandy), Nicholas; *'la birbasse fauche dans le point'* (the old woman falls into the snare); she *aboulera* (will come) to La Chouette's; the mere Martial will help us *pesciller d'esbrouffe ses durailles d'orphelin* (to take her diamonds away by force), and afterward *'trimballerons le refroidi dans ton passelant'* (we will carry the body off in your boat). *'Esbignons-nous'* (let us make haste), then; I must be at Asnières early; I am afraid my brother Martial will suspect something." And the bandits, after having held this conversation, quite unintelligible to those who might have heard it, directed their steps towards the Rue Saint Denis.

A few moments after, Rigolette and Rodolphe left the abode of Germain, got into the carriage, and drove to the Rue du Temple. When the carriage stopped, and the portière came to open the door, Rodolphe saw by the

light from the "rogomiste's," his faithful Murphy, who was waiting for him at the door of the "allée."

The presence of the squire announced some great event; or, at least, something unexpected, for he alone knew where to find the prince.

"What is the matter?" said Rodolphe, quickly, while Rigolette collected the papers in the vehicle.

"A great misfortune, monseigneur!"

"Speak, for Heaven's sake!"

"The Marquis d'Harville—" "You alarm me!"

"He gave a breakfast this morning to several of his friends. Everything was going off well; he, above all, had never been more gay, when a fatal imprudence—" "Go on, go on!"

"In playing with a pistol which he did not know was loaded—"

"He has wounded himself! Monseigneur!"

"Well?" "Something very terrible!"

"What do you say?" "He is dead!"

"D'Harville! ah! it is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, in such a heart-rending tone, that Rigolette, who had just descended from the carriage with her bundles, said,

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Some very bad news that I have just told my friend, mademoiselle," said Murphy to the young girl; for the prince was so much affected that he could not answer.

"It is, then, some great misfortune?" asked Rigolette, tremblingly. "A very great misfortune," answered the squire.

"Ah! this is frightful!" said Rodolphe, after a silence of some moments; then, recollecting Rigolette, he said to her, "Pardon me, my child, if I do not go with you to your room; to-morrow I will send you my address and a permit to go to Germain's prison. I will soon see you again."

"Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, I assure you I am very sorry for the bad news you have heard. I thank you for having accompanied me to-night. Adieu."

The prince and Murphy got into the carriage, which took them to the Rue Plumet.

Immediately, Rodolphe wrote to Clémence the following note:

"Madame,

"I learn this moment the unexpected blow which has overwhelmed you, and which takes from me one of my best friends: I shall not endeavour to describe my sorrow.

"Yet I must inform you of things foreign to this cruel event. I have just learned that your stepmother, who has been for some days in Paris, without doubt, leaves to-night for Normandy, taking with her Polodori. This will tell you of the dangers your father is threatened with, and allow me to give you some advice. After the frightful affair of this morning, your desire to leave Paris will be nothing extraordinary. Thus, believe me, set off at once for Aubiers; to arrive there, if not before, at least as soon as your stepmother. Be assured, madame, far or near, I shall still watch over you; the abominable projects of your stepmother shall be baffled.

"Adieu, madame; I write this in haste. My heart is almost broken when I think of last

evening; when I left him, more tranquil, more happy than he had been for a long time.

"Believe, madame, my profound and sincere devotion.

"RODOLPHE."

Following this advice, Madame d'Harville, three hours after the receipt of this letter, was on the road to Normandy. A post-chaise, which left the hotel of Rodolphe, followed the same route.

Unfortunately, from the trouble into which she was plunged by this complication of events, and the precipitation of her departure, Clémence forgot to acquaint the prince that she had met Fleur de Marie at Saint Lazare.

It will be remembered, perhaps, that the evening previous, La Chouette had threatened Madame Séraphin to disclose the fact of the existence of La Goualeuse, affirming that she knew (and she told the truth) where the young girl then was. It will also be remembered that after this conversation, Jacques Ferrand, fearing the revelation of his criminal misdeeds, had determined that it was for his interest to put the Goualeuse out of the way, whose existence, once known, might compromise him dangerously. He had, therefore, caused to be written to Bradamanti a note, to summon him to come and hatch some new schemes, of which Fleur de Marie was to be the victim.

Bradamanti, occupied with the interests, not less pressing, of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, who had her own reasons for conducting the quack to the bedside of M. d'Orbigny, Bradamanti, doubtless, finding it more to his advantage to serve his old friend, paid no attention to the invitation of the notary, and set out for Normandy without seeing Madame Séraphin.

The storm gathered around Jacques Ferrand; in the course of the day, La Chouette had returned to reiterate her threats, and, to prove that they were not in vain, she had declared to the notary that the little girl, formerly abandoned by Madame Séraphin, was then a prisoner at Saint Lazare, under the name of La Goualeuse, and that if they did not give her 10,000 francs in three days, this young girl should receive some papers which would inform her that she had been in her infancy confided to the care of Jacques Ferrand.

According to his custom, the notary denied all this with audacity, and drove off La Chouette as an impudent liar, although he was convinced and frightened by her threats.

In the course of the day the notary found means to assure himself that the Goualeuse was a prisoner at Saint Lazare, and so noted for her good conduct, that her release was expected from one moment to another.

Furnished with this information, Jacques Ferrand, having arranged a most diabolical scheme, felt that, to execute it, the assistance of Bradamanti was more and more indispensable; hence the frequent attempts of Madame Séraphin to see the quack. Learning the same evening of his departure, forced to act by the imminence of his fears and danger, he remembered the Martial family, those fresh-water pirates established near the bridge of Asnières, to whom Bradamanti had proposed to send Louise Morel, in order to get rid of her with impunity.

Having absolutely need of an accomplice to carry out his wicked designs against Fleur de Marie, the notary took every precaution in the case a new crime should be committed, and the next morning, after the departure of Bradamanti for Normandy, Madame Séraphin went in great haste to see the Martials.

PART VI.

CHAPTER I.

THE ISLAND OF THE RAVAGEUR.

THE following scenes took place on the evening of the day that Madame Séraphin had, according to the orders of the notary, paid a visit to the Martials, fresh-water pirates, established on the point of a small island, not far from the Pont d'Asnières. Martial, the father, who had died on the scaffold like his own father, left a widow, four sons, and two daughters. The second of these sons was already condemned to the galleys for life. Of this numerous family, there remained on the island of the ravageur, Martial, the mother: three sons; the eldest (the lover of La Louve) was twenty-five, the other twenty, the youngest twelve: two daughters; the one eighteen, the second nine. The instances of such families, where is perpetuated a kind of frightful inheritance in crime, are but too frequent. This must be so, because society thinks only of punishing, never to prevent the evil.

* * * * *

The gloomy picture which follows, the *fresh-water pirates*, has for its object to show what, in a family, the inheritance of evil may be when society either legally or kindly does not interfere to preserve the unfortunate orphans of the law from the terrible consequences of the judgment visited on their father.

The reader will excuse us for preceding this new episode by an introduction. * * *

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This being said, let us resume.

We return to the fresh-water pirates, and the isle of the ravageur. The head of the Martial family, who first established himself in this little island, was a ravageur.

The *ravageurs*, as well as the *débardeurs* and the *déchireurs* of boats, remain almost the entire day plunged in the water to their waists to follow their trade.

The *débardeurs* bring to land the floating wood.

The *déchireurs* knock to pieces the rafts which bring down the wood. Quite as aquatic as the preceding operatives, the labour of the *ravageurs* has a very different object. Advancing in the water as far as they can, the ravageur is enabled, by means of a long rake, to drag the mud and sand from the bed of the river; then, collecting this in large wooden bowls, he washes it, and thus collects a large quantity of pieces of metal of all kinds, iron, copper, lead, and brass.

Often they find in the sand fragments of gold, or silver jewels, carried into the Seine either by the gutters or from the masses of snow and ice collected in the streets in winter, and thrown

into the river. We do not know by virtue of what tradition or by what usage these industrious people, generally honest, peaceable, and laborious, are so fearfully named.

The Père Martial, first inhabitant of the island, being a *ravageur* (a sorry exception), the people living on the banks of the river called it the Island of the Ravageur.

The dwelling of the river pirates is situated at the south end of the isle. On a sign which hangs near the door can be seen :

"AUX-RENDEZVOUS DES RAVAGEURS.

"Bon vin, Bonne matelotte et fixture,
On lou des bachots pour la promenade."

It will be seen, that to his other business the head of this family had added that of an innkeeper, fisherman, and the keeping of boats for hire. The widow of this executed criminal continued to keep the house. Vagabonds, wandering quacks, and itinerant keepers of animals came to pass Sundays and other non-working days in parties of pleasure.

Martial (the lover of La Louve), the eldest son of the family, the least vicious of all, fished by stealth, and, when occasion required, took the part of the weak against the strong.

One of his other brothers, Nicolas, the future accomplice of Barbillion in the murder of the diamond broker, was apparently a *ravageur*, but, in fact, a fresh-water pirate on the Seine and its banks. Finally, François, the youngest son, took care of those who wished to go boating. We will just mention Ambroise Martial, who was condemned for life for robbery and attempt at murder. The eldest girl, surnamed Calebasse, assisted her mother in the kitchen and to wait upon the guests; her sister Amadine, aged nine years, gave what aid she could to Calebasse and her mother.

On this night, thick and heavy clouds, driven by the winds, obscured the sky; hardly a star could be seen through the increasing gloom. The house, with its irregular gables, was completely buried in darkness, except the two windows of the ground floor, from which streamed a red light, which was reflected like two long trains of fire on the troubled waters near the landing-place, which was close to the house. The chains of the boat moored there mingled their rattlings with the mournful sighings of the wind through the poplars, and the heavy splashing of the water on the shore. A part of the family was assembled in the kitchen of the house, a large and low room; opposite the door were two windows, under which was a large furnace; on the left, a high fireplace; to the right, a staircase which led to the upper story; at the side of this, the entrance to a large room, furnished with several tables, destined for the guests of the inn. The light of a lamp, joined to the flames of the hearth, shone on a number of saucepans, and other cooking utensils of copper, hung on the walls, or arranged on shelves with various kinds of crockery; a large table stood in the centre of this kitchen. The widow was seated by the fire with her three children. This woman, tall and thin, appeared to be about forty-five years of age. She was dressed in black; a mourning kerchief, tied round her head, concealed her hair, and almost covered her pale and wrinkled forehead; her nose was

long, straight, and pointed; her cheek bones prominent, and cheeks fallen in; her yellow, sickly-looking skin was deeply marked with the smallpox; the corners of her mouth always drawn down, rendered still harsher the expression of this cold, stern, sinister-looking face, immovable as a mask of marble. Her dull, blue eyes were surmounted by gray eyebrows. She and her two daughters were occupied with some sewing.

The eldest resembled her mother—the same cold, calm, and wicked look; her thin nose, her mouth, her pale look. Only her earthy skin, yellow as saffron, gave her the nickname of Calebasse. She wore no mourning: her dress was brown; her black lace cap displayed two bands of uncommon hair, light flaxen, with no lustre. François, the youngest son, was seated on a bench mending an *aldret*, a very destructive sort of fishing net, strictly forbidden to be used on the Seine. Notwithstanding his sunburnt appearance, the skin of this child was fair; a forest of red hair covers his head; his features are well turned, his lips thick, his forehead projecting, his eyes sharp and piercing: there was no resemblance to his mother nor eldest sister. His expression was timid and cunning; from time to time, through the kind of mane which fell over his face, he cast obliquely on his mother a look of defiance, or exchanged with his sister Amadine a glance of intelligence and affection.

She, seated at the side of her brother, was occupied, not in marking, but in unmarking some linen stolen the night previous. She was nine years old, and resembled her brother as much as her sister did her mother; her features, without being any more regular, are less coarse than those of François; although covered with freckles, her skin was of dazzling purity; her lips were thick, but vermilion; her hair red, but fine, silky, and brilliant; her eyes small, but soft and expressive.

When they exchanged looks, Amadine pointed to the door; at this sign François answered by a sigh; then, calling the attention of his sister by a rapid gesture, he counted distinctly from the end of his netting-needle ten threads of the net. This meant, in their symbolical language, that their brother Martial would not return before ten o'clock.

On seeing these two quiet, wicked-looking women, and these two poor, little, restless, mute, trembling children, one would easily guess there were two executioners and two victims.

Calebasse, perceiving that Amadine had ceased a moment from work, said to her, in a harsh voice,

"Will you soon have done with that chemise?"

The child held down her head without replying; with her fingers and scissors, she quickly finished picking out the marks made with red cotton, and then, handing the work to her mother, said, timidly,

"Mamma, I have finished it." Without making any reply, the widow threw her another piece of linen. The child could not catch it in time, and let it fall. Her sister gave her, with her iron hand, a heavy blow on the arm, saying, "Little stupid fool!" Amadine resumed her

work after having exchanged a hasty glance with her brother: a tear glistened in her eye. The same silence continued to reign in the kitchen. The wind howled without, and the sign creaked mournfully on its hinges. The only sounds within were the bubbling of a saucepan placed before the fire. The two children observed with secret alarm that their mother did not speak. Although she was habitually very quiet, this complete taciturnity and certain contractions of her lips announced that the widow was in that which they called her *white-rage*, that is to say, a prey to some concentrated irritation.

The fire appeared to be going out from the want of fuel.

"François, a stick of wood!" said Calbasse. The young mender of unlawful nets looked behind the chimney-piece, and answered, "There is no more there."

"Go to the wood-pile," said Calbasse.

François murmured some unintelligible words, but did not stir.

"Ah! François, did you hear me?" said Calbasse, sharply. The widow placed on her knees a napkin, which she also was unmarking, and looked at her son.

He had his head down, but he thought he felt the terrible look of his mother was upon him. Fearing to meet this formidable face, the child remained immovable.

"Ah! now are you deaf, François?" resumed Calbasse, much irritated. "Mother—you see."

Amandine, without being perceived, pushed gently the arm of her brother to urge him tactfully to obey Calbasse. François did not stir. The eldest sister looked at her mother, as if to demand the punishment of the offender. The widow understood her; pointed with her long, bony finger to a long willow switch, which stood in the corner.

Calbasse leaned back, took this instrument of correction, and handed it to her mother.

François had perfectly understood the gesture of his mother; he jumped up quickly, and with one bound was out of his mother's reach. "You wish, then, that mother should beat you soundly?" cried Calbasse.

The widow, holding the rod in her hand, bit her lips, and looked at François with a steady eye, without pronouncing a word. From the slight agitation of Amandine's hands, who sat with her head down, while her neck was suffused with red, it could be seen that the child, although accustomed to such scenes, was alarmed at the fate which awaited her brother, who, having taken refuge in a corner of the kitchen, seemed alarmed and irritated.

"Take care of yourself; mother will get up, and then it will be too late," said Calbasse.

"All the same to me," answered François, turning pale. "I prefer to be beaten as I was yesterday, than to go to the wood-pile at night."

"And why?" said Calbasse, impatiently.

"I am afraid at the wood pile, I am," answered François, shuddering in spite of himself.

"You are afraid, fool! and of what?"

François hung his head without answering.

"Will you speak? What are you afraid of?"

"I don't know; but I'm afraid."

"You have been there a hundred times, and even last night."

"I don't want to go there any more."

"There's naught; she's getting up!"

"So much the worse," cried the child. "Let her beat me; let her kill me; I will not go to the wood-pile—at night, above all."

"But, once more I ask you, why not?" said Calbasse.

"Well, because." "Because what?"

"Because there's some one—" "Some one?"

"Buried there," murmured the trembling boy.

The widow, notwithstanding her impossibility, could not repress a slight shudder; her daughter imitated her; one would have said that these two women had received an electric shock.

"There's some one buried in the wood-house?" said Calbasse, shrugging her shoulders.

"Yes," said François, in a voice so low that he could hardly be heard. "Lies!" cried Calbasse.

"I tell you that not long ago, in piling the wood, I saw, in a dark corner of the wood-house, a dead man's bone; it stuck out of the ground, which was damp round about," replied François.

"Do you hear him, mother? Is he not a fool?" said Calbasse, making a significant sign to the widow. "They are some mutton bones I threw there."

"It is not a mutton bone," answered the child; "it was bones buried—dead man's bones; a foot which stuck out of the ground. I saw it."

"And right away! you told this to your brother; to your good friend Martial, did you not?" said Calbasse. François did not answer.

"Wicked little *raïste* (spy), cried Calbasse, furiously; "because he is as cowardly as a cow, he will be capable to have us *faucher* (guillotined); as our father was."

"Since you call me a *raïste*," cried François, exasperated, "I shall tell everything to Martial. I have not told him yet; for I have not seen him since; but when he returns to-night, I—"

The child dared not finish. His mother advanced toward him, calm but inexorable.

Although she habitually held herself much bent over, her size was very large for a woman; holding the switch in one hand, with the other the widow took her son by the arm, and, in spite of the alarm, the resistance, the prayers, the tears of the child, dragging him after her, she compelled him to mount the stairs. In a moment was heard the sound of heavy blows, mingled with cries and sobs. When this noise ceased a door was shut violently, and the widow descended. She placed the whip in its place, seated herself alongside of the fire, and resumed her work without saying a word.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIVER PIRATES.

AFTER a few moments silence, the widow said to her daughter,

"Go and get some wood; we will arrange the woodhouse to-night, at the return of Nicolas and Martial." "Martial! You will also then

"Tell him that?" "Some wood!" repeated the widow, interrupting her daughter. She, accustomed to this iron will, lighted a lantern and went out. At the moment she opened the door, it could be seen that the night was very dark, and one could hear the whistling of the wind through the poplars, the clanging of the chains which held the boats, the waving of the river. These noises were profoundly sad.

During the preceding scene, Amandine, painfully affected at the fate of François, whom she loved tenderly, had dared neither to raise her eyes nor wipe her tears, which fell drop by drop on her knees. The tears obscured her sight. In her haste to finish the work which was given her, she had wounded her hand with the scissors; the blood flowed freely, but the poor child thought less of the pain than the punishment which she might expect for having stained this linen with her blood. Happily, the widow, absorbed in profound thought, perceived nothing. Calebasse returned, bringing a basket filled with wood. At a look from her mother, she answered by a sign in the affirmative. This was intended to say that the dead man's foot did appear above the earth.

The widow bit her lips and continued to work, only she appeared to handle the needle more quickly. Calebasse replenished the fire, and resumed her seat alongside of her mother.

"Nicolas does not come," said she; "I hope that the old woman who was here this morning, in giving him a rendezvous with a 'bourgeois,' on the part of Bradamanti, has not got him into some bad scrape. She had such an air! she would not explain, nor tell her name, nor where she came from."

The widow shrugged her shoulders.

"You think there is no danger for Nicolas, mother? after all, perhaps you are right." "The old woman said he must be on the 'Quai de Billy' at seven o'clock in the evening, opposite the dock, and that he would find a man there who wished to speak to him, and who would say Bradamanti for pass-word. Really, that does not seem so very dangerous. If Nicolas is late, it is, perhaps because, he has found something on the route, as he did yesterday; this linen, which he has '*grinchi*' (stolen) from a washing-boat, and she showed one of the pieces of linen which Amadine was marking; then speaking to the child, she said, "What does that mean, '*grinchi*'?" "That means to take," answered the child, without raising her eyes. "It means to steal, little fool; do you hear? to steal." "Yes, sister." "And when one knows how to '*grinchi*' like Nicolas, there is always something to gain; the linen he stole yesterday has only cost us the trouble of picking out the marks: is it not so, mother?" said Calebasse, with a burst of laughter which displayed her decayed teeth, as yellow as her skin. The widow did not laugh. "Apropos, speaking of getting things gratis," continued Calebasse, "we can, perhaps, furnish ourselves from another shop. You know that an old man, two or three days since, came to live in the country-house of M. Griffon, the physician of the Paris hospital; that lonely house, a few steps from the river, opposite the plaster quarry!" The widow bowed her head.

"Nicolas said yesterday that now there was,

perhaps, something to be done there. And I know, since this morning, that there is some booty there for certain; I must send Amadine to wander around the house; they will pay no attention to her; she will pretend to be playing, will look well about her, and then come and let us know what she has seen. Do you hear what I say?"

"Yes, sister, I will go," answered the trembling child.

"You always say 'I will,' but you never do it, 'sournois!' The time when I told you to take the five francs from the counter of the grocer at 'Annières,' while I kept him busy at the other end of his shop—it was very easy; no one suspects a child—why didn't you obey?"

"Sister, my heart failed me; I did not dare."

"The other day you dared to steal a handkerchief from the pack of the pedler while he was selling at the tavern. Did he find it out, fool?" "Sister, you forced me—it was for you; and, besides, it was not money." "What of that?" "Dame! to take a handkerchief is not so bad as to take money." "On your word! it is Martial who teaches you these whims, is it not?" said Calebasse, in an ironical manner; "you'll go and tell him everything, little spy! do you think we are afraid that he'll eat us?" Then, addressing the widow, Calebasse added: "Do you see, mother, this will end badly for him! he wishes to make the law here. Nicolas is furious against him, so am I. He sets Amadine and François against us, against you. Can it be borne!"

"No," said the mother, in a short, harsh voice.

"It is, above all, since his Louise is at Saint Lazare, that he acts like a madman. Is it our fault that she is in prison? When she is once out, let her come here, and I will serve her—good measure—although she is strong." The widow, after a moment's pause, said to her daughter, "You think there is something to be done with the old man who lives in doctor's house?" "Yes, mother." "He looks like a beggar." "That doesn't prevent his being a noble." "A noble?" "Yes, and that he should have gold in his purse, although he goes to Paris on foot every day, and returns in the same manner, with his heavy stick for his carriage." "How do you know that there is gold?" "The other day I was at the postoffice, to see if there were any letters from Toulon." At these words, which brought to her mind her son at the galleys, the widow knit her brows, and suppressed a sigh. Calebasse continued: "I awaited my turn, when the old man we speak of came in. I knew him at once by his beard, as white as his hair, and his black eyebrows. In spite of his age, he must be a determined old man; he said, 'Have you any letters from Angers for the Curate of Saint Demy?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'here is one.' 'It is for me,' said he; 'here is my passport.' While the postmaster examined it, the old man drew out his purse to pay the postage. At one end I saw the gold glittering through the meshes, at least forty or fifty Louis!" cried Calebasse, her eyes twinkling, "and yet he is dressed like a beggar. It is one of these old misers stuffed with gold. Come, mother! we know his name; it may serve us to get into the house

when Amadine finds out if he has any servants."

A violent barking of the dogs interrupted Calabasse. "Ah! the dogs bark," said she; "they hear a boat. It is either Martial or Nicolas."

After a few moments, the door opened, and Nicolas Martial, the future accomplice of Borbillion, made his appearance. The face of Nicolas was at once ignoble and ferocious; small, thin, pitiful, it could hardly be imagined that he followed so dangerous a calling; but an indomitable energy supplied the place of the physical strength which was wanting. Over his blue "bourgeois" he wore a kind of greatcoat, without sleeves, made of goat-skin covered with long hair. On entering, he threw on the ground a pig of copper which he had on his shoulder. "Good-night, and good booty, mother!" cried he, in a cracked voice; "there are three more pigs in my boat, a bundle of clothes, and a box filled with I don't know what, for I have not amused myself by opening it. Perhaps I am 'vole'—we shall see." "And what about the man at the *Quai de Billy*?" asked Calabasse, while the widow looked at her son without saying a word. He, for sole answer, put his hand in his pocket and fangled together a number of pieces of silver.

"You took all that from him?" cried Calabasse.

"No, he shelled out himself two hundred francs, and he will shell out eight hundred more when I shall have—but enough; let us unload the boat; we can jaw afterward. Isn't Martial here?" "No," said the sister. "So much the better; we will lock up the booty without him; just as well he shouldn't know."

"You are afraid of him, coward!" said Calabasse, crossly.

"Afraid of him! me!" He shrugged his shoulders. "I am afraid he'll sell us, that's all. As to the fear, *coute effroi* (my knife) has too sharp a tongue!" "Oh! when he is not here, you brag; let him but come, that shuts your bill." Nicolas appeared insensible to this reproach, and said, "Come, quick! quick! to the boat. Where, then, is François, mother! he could help us."

"Mother has shut him up stairs, after having 'rinsed' him nicely; he shall go to bed without supper," said Calabasse.

"Good! but let him come and help us unload the boat, all the same; hey, mother! Calabasse, him, and me, in a twist, will have all housed." The widow pointed towards the ceiling. Calabasse understood, and went to look for François.

The gloomy visage of the mother Martial had become slightly relaxed since the arrival of Nicolas; she liked him better than Calabasse, but not as well as she did her Toulon son, as she called him; for the maternal love of this ferocious creature increased in proportion to the criminality of her offspring. This perverse preference sufficiently explains the dislike of the widow to her youngest children, who displayed no bad tendencies, and her profound hatred for Martial, her eldest son, who, without leading a blameless life, might have passed for a very honest man, if he had been compared to Nicolas, Calabasse, or his brother, the galley-slave at Toulon. "Where have you been plundering to-

night," asked the widow. "On returning from the 'Quai de Billy,' I cast a sheep's eye upon a galley fastened to the 'quai,' near the 'Point des Invalides.' It was dark; I said, no light in the cabin—the sailors are on shore—I'll go on board; if I meet any one, I'll ask for a piece of twine to mend my oar. I went into the cabin—nobody; then I took what I could, some clothes, a large box, and, on the deck, four pigs of copper; for I returned twice; the galley was loaded with copper and iron. But here come François and Calabasse: quick to the boat! Come, be moving, you too! eh! Amadine. You can carry the clothes. *Avant de chasser—fait rapport.*"

Left alone, the widow busied herself in preparing the supper for the family, placing on the table glasses, bottles, plates, and silver forks and spoons. Just as she finished her preparation, her children returned heavily laden. The weight of the two pigs, which he carried on his shoulders, seemed almost to crush François. Amadine was hardly visible under the bundle of clothes which she carried on her head. Nicolas and Calabasse carried between them a box of white wood, on the top of which was placed the fourth pig of copper. "The box, the box!" cried Calabasse, with impatience; "let us air the case!"

The copper was thrown on the ground. Nicolas, armed with a hatchet, endeavoured to get it under the cover, so as to force it. The red and flickering light from the hearth illuminated this scene of pillage; without the wind howled with renewed violence. Nicolas, kneeling before the box, tried to break it, and uttered the most horrible oaths on seeing his efforts were useless. Her eyes glistened with cupidity, her cheeks flushed, Calabasse knelt on the box, and assisted Nicolas with all her strength. The widow, separated from the group by the table, where she stood at full length, also had her eager gaze fixed on the stolen object.

Finally, a thing alas! too human, the two children, whose good natural instincts had so often triumphed over the cursed influence of this abominable domestic corruption, forgetting their scruples and their fears, gave way to the attractions of a fatal curiosity. Leaning one against the other, their eyes sparkling, the breathing oppressed, François and Amadine were not less anxious to know the contents of the box than their brother or sister. At length the top was forced off.

"Ah!" cried the family, in a joyful tone. And all, from the mother to the little girl, crowded around the stolen case. Sent, without doubt, by some Paris merchant to some of his country customers, it contained a large quantity of articles for women's use.

"Nicolas n'est pas vole!" cried Calabasse, unrolling a piece of 'mousseline de laine.' "No," answered the brigand, shaking out a package of 'foulards'; "no, I have paid my expenses." "Levantine! that will sell like bread," said the widow, putting her hand in the box. "The receiver of Bras-Rouge, who lives in the Rue du Temple, will buy the stuffs, and the Père Micou, who keeps furnished lodgings in the 'quartier Saint Honoré,' will arrange for the 'rouge' (copper)."

"Amadine," whispered François to his little-

sister, "what a pretty cravat this would make." "Yes, and it would make a very fine 'marmotte,'" answered the child with admiration. "I must say you had some luck, getting on board this galley," said Calebasse: "look here, famous! now, some shawls. There are three, real bourre-de-soie; do look, mother!" "La Mère Burette will give at least five hundred francs for the whole," said the widow, after a close examination.

"Then it must be worth at least one thousand and five hundred francs," said Nicolas; "but, as we say, 'tout receleur—tout voleur.' Bah! so much the worse; I do not know how to cheat. I shall be soft enough this time, again, to do just as La Mère Burette wishes, and the Père Micou also; but as for him, he is a friend." "Never mind, he is a robber, just like the rest; the seller of old iron; but these rascally receivers know one has need of them," said Calebasse, trying on one of the shawls, "and they abuse it!" "There's nothing more," said Nicolas, reaching the bottom of the box. "Now, all must be repacked," said the widow. "I'll keep this shawl," said Calebasse. "You'll keep—you'll keep," cried Nicolas, brutally. "you'll keep it—if I give it to you. You are always taking—you—Madame Make-easy." "Ah! And you, then, you refrain from taking!"

"I! I *grinche* at the risk of my skin. It's not you who'd have been juggled if they'd caught me in the galley."

"Well, there's your shawl; I don't care about it," said Calebasse, sharply, throwing it back into the cage.

"It is not on account of the shawl that I speak; I am not mean enough to value a shawl; one more or less, La Mère Burette will not change her price; she'll buy in a lump," said Nicolas. "But, instead of saying that you'd take the shawl, you might ask if I would give it to you. Come, let us see, keep it—keep it, I tell you, or, if you won't, I'll pitch it into the fire to make the pot boil." These words soothed the bad temper of Calebasse, and she took the shawl. Nicolas was, doubtless, in a generous mood; for, tearing off with his teeth two of the handsomest foulards, he threw them to François and Amandine.

"That's for you, 'gamins!' this mouthful will put you in the notion to 'grincher.' Appetite comes with eating. Now go to bed; I want to talk with mother. Your supper shall be brought up stairs." The two children clapped their hands, and waved triumphantly the stolen "foulards" which had just been given them. "Well! little blockheads," said Calebasse, "will you listen any more to Martial? Has he ever given you such handsome foulards as these?" François and Amandine looked at each other, then hung their heads without replying.

"Speak, then!" said Calebasse, harshly; "has he ever made you presents?" "Dame, no; he never has," said François, looking at his red handkerchief with delight. Amandine said, in a very low tone, "Our brother Martial does not make us presents, because he hasn't the means."

"If he would steal he'd have them," said Nicolas; "is it not so, François?" "Yes,

brother," answered François. Then he added, "Oh! the beautiful 'foulard!' What a fine cravat for Sunday!" "And me, what a fine marmotte!" said Amandine. "Not to say a word how mad the children of the lime-burner will be when they see you pass," said Calebasse, looking at the children to see if they comprehended the bearing of the words. The abominable creature thus called vanity to her assistance to stifle the last scruples of conscience. "The beggars! they will burst with envy; while you, with your fine silk foulards, will look like little 'bourgeoise!'"

"That's true," answered François. "Then I am much more content with my fine cravat, since the little lime-burners will be so mad and jealous; ain't you, Amandine?" "I am content with my fine 'marmotte'—there." "You'll never be anything but a 'colasse!'" said Calebasse, disdainfully. Then, taking from the table a piece of bread and cheese, she gave it to the children, and said, "Go up-stairs to bed. Here is a lantern. Take care of the fire, and put out the light before you go to sleep." "Ah now," added Nicolas, "remember well, if you say a word to Martial about the box, or the pigs of copper, or the clothes, you shall have a dance, so that you'll take fire; not to say a word about taking away the foulards."

After the departure of the children, Nicolas and his sister hid the stolen articles in a little cellar under the kitchen.

"Ah ça! mother! some drink, and let it be choice," cried the bandit; "I have well earned my day. Serve the supper, Calebasse; Martial shall gnaw our bones—good for him. Now let us talk of the 'bourgeois' of the 'Quai Billy,' for to-morrow or next day that must come off, if I wish to pocket the money which he promised. I am going to tell you this, mother; but some drink, thunder! some drink. It is I who treats!"

And Nicolas rattled the money which he had in his pocket anew; then, throwing off his goatskin jacket and his black woollen cap, he seated himself at the table before a large ragout of mutton, a piece of cold veal, and a salad.

When Calebasse had brought some wine and brandy, the widow seated herself at the table, having Nicolas on her right and Calebasse on her left; opposite were the unoccupied places of Martial and the two children. The bandit drew from his pocket a long and broad catalan knife, with a horn handle and sharp blade. Looking at this murderous weapon with a kind of ferocious satisfaction, he said to the widow, "'Coupe-sifflet' still cuts well! Pass me the bread, mother!" "Speaking of knives," said Calebasse, "François saw something in the woodhouse." "What?" said Nicolas, not understanding her. "He saw one of the feet—" "Of the man?" cried Nicolas. "Yes," said the widow, putting a slice of meat on the plate of her son. "That's droll! the hole was very deep," said the brigand; "but since that time should have been heaped up." "We must throw everything into the river to-night," said the widow. "It is more sure," answered Nicolas.

"We can tie a stone to it with a piece of old chain," added Calebasse. "Not so foolish!" said Nicolas, pouring out a drink; "come, drink

with us, mother; it will make you more lively." The widow shook her head, drew back her glass, and said to her son, "And the man at the 'Quai de Billy?'" "This is it," said Nicolas, continuing to eat and drink. "On arriving at the wharf, I tied my boat, and mounted on the 'quai,' seven o'clock struck at the military bakehouse of Chailot; could hardly see your hand before your face. I walked up and down for about fifteen minutes, when I heard some one walk softly behind me: I stopped; a man wrapped in a cloak approached, coughing; he halted. All that I know of his face is, that his cloak hid his nose, and his hat covered his eyes." (We will recall to the reader that this mysterious personage was Jacques Ferrand, who, wishing to make away with Fleur de Marie, had that morning despatched Madame Séraphin to the Martials', whom he hoped to make his instruments in this new crime.) "'Bradamant,' said the 'bourgeois,'" continued Nicolas; "this was the password agreed upon with the old woman. 'Ravageur,' I replied.

"Is your name Martial?" said he to me.

"Yes, bourgeois." "A woman came to your island this morning; what did she say?" "That you had something to say to me on the part of M. Bradamanti." "Do you wish to gain some money?" "Yes, "Bourgeois"—much."

"Have you a boat?" "We have four, bourgeois; it is our business; boatmen and "ravageurs" from father to son, at your service." "This is what is to be done—if you are not afraid—" "Afraid—of what, bourgeois?" "To see some one *drowned by accident*; only it is necessary to assist the accident. Do you comprehend?" "Ah ça, bourgeois, you want to make an individual drink some of the Seine by chance! that suits me; but, as it is rather a delicate "fricot," the seasoning will cost rather dear." "How much for two?" "For two! will there be two persons to make soup of in the river?" "Yes."

"Five hundred francs a head, bourgeois, and it's not dear!" "Agreed for a thousand francs." "Pay in advance, bourgeois?" "Two hundred in advance, the remainder afterward."

"You are afraid to trust me, Bourgeois?" "No, you can pocket my two hundred francs without fulfilling our agreement." "And you, bourgeois, once the affair finished, when I ask you for the remainder, you can answer me, go to the devil!"

"You must run your chance; does this suit you, yes or no? two hundred francs down, and the night after to-morrow, here, at nine o'clock, I will give you eight hundred francs." "And who shall tell you that I have made these two persons drink?"

"I shall know it, that's my affair; is it a bargain?"

"It is, bourgeois." "Here's your money. Now listen to me: you will know the old woman again who came to see you this morning?" "Yes, bourgeois." "To-morrow, or the day after at farthest, you will see her arrive towards four o'clock in the afternoon on the shore opposite your island with a young girl; the old woman will make you a signal by waving her handkerchief." "Yes, bourgeois." "How long does it take to go from the shore to your island?" "Twenty good minutes." "Your boats

have flat bottoms?" "Flat as your hand, bourgeois." "You must make adroitly a kind of large "soupape" (a bung hole) in the bottom of one of your boats, so as to be able, by opening this "soupape," to make it sink in a twinkling; do you comprehend?" "Very well, bourgeois; you are the devil! I have exactly an old boat that I was about to break up; it will just answer for this last voyage."

"You set out, then, from your island with this boat; a good boat follows you, conducted by some one of your family. You land; you take the old woman and the young girl on board your boat, and you set off for the island; but, at a reasonable distance from the shore, you feign to stoop to fix something; you open the "soupape," and you jump lightly into the other boat, while the old woman and the young girl—" "Drink out of the same cup—that's it—hey, bourgeois!" "But are you sure of not being disturbed? if there should be any guests at your tavern?" "No fear, bourgeois; at this time, and in winter above all, no one comes; it is our dead season; and if any one should come, they would not be in the way; on the contrary, —all tried friends." "Very well! Besides, you will not be at all compromised; the boat will sink through age, and the old woman with it. In fine, to be well assured that both of them are drowned (remember, by accident), you should, if they appear again, or if they cling to the boat, appear to do all in your power to assist them, and—" "Aid them—to dive again! Good, bourgeois!" "It is better that the execution take place after sunset, so that it be dark when they fall into the water." "No, bourgeois, for if one cannot see clear, how can they know whether the two women have drunk their fill, or want some more?" "That is true; then the accident must happen before dark." "Very good, bourgeois; but does the old woman suspect anything?" "No. On arriving she will whisper in your ear, *We must drown the girl; a short time before you sink the boat, make me a sign, so that I can escape with you.* You must answer in such a manner as to calm any suspicions." "So that she thinks to lead the little blonde to drink!" "And she will drink with the little blonde." "It is wisely arranged, bourgeois." "And, above all, let the old woman suspect nothing." "Be easy, bourgeois; she shall swallow it like honey." "Well, good luck, mon garçon! If I am pleased, perhaps I shall employ you again!" "At your service, bourgeois!" Thereupon," said the brigand, ending his story, "I left the man in the cloak, got into my boat, and, passing by the galley, I picked up the booty you have seen."

It will be seen, from the recital of Nicolas, that the notary wished, by means of a double crime, to get rid of Fleur de Marie and of Madame Séraphin at the same time, by making the latter fall into the snare she believed only opened for La Goualeuse. The reasons for putting the latter out of the way are known to the reader; and as to Madame Séraphin, in sacrificing her he silenced one of his accomplices (Bradamanti was the other), who could at any time ruin him by ruining themselves, it is true; but Jacques Ferrand thought his secrets better guarded by the tomb than by personal interest. The widow and Calebasse had attentively list-

ened to Nicolas, who had only interrupted himself to drink to excess. For this reason he began to talk with singular warmth. "That's not all; I have managed another affair with La Chouette and Barbillon, of the Rue aux Fèves. It is a famous affair, knowingly got up, and if we don't fail, there'll be something to fry, I tell you. It is in contemplation to rob a diamond broker, who has sometimes as much as 50,000 francs value in her box." "Fifty thousand francs!" cried the mother and daughter, their eyes sparkling with cupidity. "Yes, that's all! Bras-Rouge is of the party. Yesterday he decoyed the broker by a letter which Barbillon and I took to her on the Boulevard Saint Denis. Bras-Rouge is a famous fellow! As there is something to be gained, we do not suspect him. To make her bite, he has already sold her a diamond for 400 francs. She will not fail to come, at dusk, to his tavern in the Champs-Élysées. We will be there concealed. Calebasse shall come also: she will take care of my boat. If it is necessary to pack up the broker, dead or alive, this will be a nice carriage, and leave no traces behind. There's a plan for you! Rogue of a Bras-Rouge, what a 'Sorbonne'!"

"I am always suspicious of Bras-Rouge," said the widow. "After the affair of the Rue Montmartre, your brother Ambrose was sent to Toulon, and Bras-Rouge was released."

"Because there was no proofs against him; he is so cunning! But to betray others—never!" The widow shook her head, as if she had been only half convinced of the *probity* of Bras-Rouge. "I prefer," said she, "the affair of the Quai Billy—the 'noyade' of the two women. But Martial will be in the way, as he always is." "The devil's thunder will not rid us of him then!" cried Nicolas, half drunk, sticking his long knife with fury in the table. "I told mother that we had had enough of him; that it could not last," said Calebasse; "as long as he is here, we can make nothing out of the children." "I tell you he is capable of denouncing us from one day to another, the brig-and!" said Nicolas. "Do you see, mother; if you'd have believed," added he, in a ferocious manner, looking at the widow, "all would have been said." "There are other means." "This is the best." "At present, no," answered the widow, with a tone so absolute that Nicolas was quiet, ruled by the influence of his mother. She added: "To-morrow morning he shall leave the island forever." "How!" said Calebasse and Nicolas in a breath. "He will soon come in; seek a quarrel—boldly—as you have never dared to do. Come to blows, if needs be. He is strong, but you will be two, and I will help you. Above all, no knives—no blood; let him be beaten, not wounded." "And what then?" asked Nicolas. "We'll have an explanation; we will tell him to leave the island to-morrow, otherwise we'll repeat this again to-morrow night; these continual quarrels will disgust him, I know it; we have let him be too quiet." "But he is stubborn as a mule; he'll just remain on account of the children," said Calebasse. "He is a 'guez fin', and an attack will not scare him," added Nicolas. "A—yes," said the widow; "but every day, every day; it is hell; he will give

up." "And if he will not?" "Then I have another plan to force him to leave to-night, or to-morrow morning at latest," answered the widow, with a strange smile. "Truly, mother!" "Yes; but I would rather frighten him by quarrelling and fighting; if I do not then succeed, I'll try the other way." "And if the other way don't answer, mother?" said Nicolas. "There is still another, which always does," replied the widow. Suddenly the door opened and Martial entered. It blew so hard outside that they had not heard the barking of the dogs announcing the arrival of the eldest son of the widow.

CHAPTER III.

THE MOTHER AND THE SON.

IGNORANT of the evil designs of his family, Martial entered slowly into the kitchen. Some words of La Louve, in her conversation with Fleur de Marie, have already informed us of the singular life of this man. Endowed with good natural instincts, incapable of an action positively bad or wicked, Martial did not conduct himself as he should have done. He fished contrary to law, and his strength, his audacity, inspired so much terror in the guardians of the fisheries, that they shut their eyes on his proceedings.

The lover of La Louve resembled François and Amandine very much; he was of middling stature, but robust and with broad shoulders; his thick, red hair, cut short, laid in points on his open forehead; his thick, heavy beard, his large cheeks, his square nose, his blue and bold eyes, gave to him a singularly resolute expression.

He wore an old waxed hat; and, notwithstanding the cold, he had nothing on but a wretched blouse over his well-worn vest and pantaloons of coarse velveteen. He held in his hand an enormous knotty stick, which he placed alongside of him on the table.

A fat terrier dog, with crooked legs, came in with Martial; but he remained near the door, not daring to approach the fire, nor the people at the table; experience had proved to old *Miram*, that he was, as well as his master, not in very good odour with the family. "Where are the children?" Such were the first words of Martial when he took his seat at the table.

"They are where they are," answered Calebasse, sharply.

"Where are the children, mother?" repeated Martial, without paying any attention to his sister. "They are gone to bed," answered the widow, dryly. "Have they supped, mother?" "What's that to you?" cried Nicolas, brutally, after having swallowed a large glass of wine, to augment his audacity.

Martial, as indifferent to the attacks of Nicolas as he was to those of Calebasse, said again to his mother,

"I am sorry the children have already gone to bed."

"So much the worse," replied the widow.

"Yes, so much the worse; for I like to have them alongside of me when I sup."

"And we, as they trouble us, we sent them off," cried Nicolas; "if it don't please you, go and look for them!"

Martial, much surprised, looked fixedly at his brother. Then, as if reflecting on the folly of a

quarrel, he shrugged his shoulders, cut a piece of bread with his knife, and helped himself to a slice of meat. The terrier had drawn nearer to Nicolas, although still at a very respectful distance; the bandit, irritated at the contemptuous indifference of his brother, and hoping to make him lose his patience by striking the dog, gave Mirant a furious kick, which made him howl piteously. Martial became purple, pressed in his contracted hands the knife which he held, and struck violently on the table; but, still containing himself, he called his dog, and said gently, "Here, Mirant!" The terrier came and laid down at his master's feet. This moderation defeated the projects of Nicolas; he wished to push his brother to extremities, to bring about a rupture. So he added, "I don't like dogs—I won't have your dog here!" For answer, Martial poured out a glass of wine, and drank it slowly.

Exchanging a rapid glance with Nicolas, the widow encouraged him by a sign to continue his hostilities, hoping that a violent quarrel would bring about a rupture and a complete separation.

Nicolas went and took the willow switch which stood in the corner, and, approaching the terrier, he struck him, crying, "Go out from this, hé, Mirant!" Up to this time, Nicolas had often shown his animosity towards Martial, but never before had he dared to provoke him with so much audacity and perseverance. At the cry from his dog, Martial arose, opened the door of the kitchen, put the terrier outside, and returned to continue his supper. This incredible patience, so little in harmony with the ordinary character of Martial, confounded his aggressors. They looked at each other, very much surprised. He, appearing completely a stranger to what was passing, ate heartily, and kept a profound silence.

"Calebasse, take away the wine," said the widow to her daughter. She hastened to obey, when Martial said, "Stop! I have not finished my supper." "So much the worse!" said the widow, taking away the bowl. "Ah! that is different!" answered he, and pouring out a large glass of water, he drank it, and smacking his lips, cried, "That's famous water!" This imperturbable "sang froid" still more irritated Nicolas, already much excited by his frequent libations; nevertheless, he recoiled before a direct attack, knowing the superior strength of his brother; suddenly he cried,

"You have done well to knock under with your dog, Martial: it is a good habit to get into; for you must expect to see La Louve kicked out, just as we have kicked out your dog."

"Oh, yes—for if she has the misfortune to come to the island when she comes out of prison," said Calebasse, comprehending the intention of Nicolas, "I it is who will box her soundly!"

"And I'll give her a ducking in the mud, near the hovel at the other end of the island," added Nicolas; "and if she comes up again, I'll put her under again, with blows from my shoe—the hassey." This insult, addressed to La Louve, whom he loved with unqualified passion, triumphed over the pacific resolutions of Martial; he knit his brows, his blood rushed to his face, the veins on his forehead and neck swelled like ropes; yet he still had command over himself to say to Nicolas, in a voice altered by suppressed rage, "Take care of yourself—you seek a quarrel, and you will find a turn that you do not look for." "A turn—to me?" "Yes, better than the last." "How? Nicolas," said Calebasse, with well-feigned attachment, "has Martial beat you?

I say, mother, do you hear? I am no more astonished that Nicolas is afraid of him." "He whipped me, because he took me unawares," cried Nicolas, becoming pale with rage.

"You lie! you attacked me slyly, I kicked you, and I took pity on you; but if you undertake to speak again of La Louve—understand well, of my Louve—then I'll have no mercy—you shall carry my marks for a long time."

"And if I wish to speak of La Louve, I?" said Calebasse, "I will give you a couple of boxes just to warn you; and if you go on, I'll go on to warn you." "And if I speak of her?" said the widow, slowly. "You?" "Yes, me!" "You?" said Martial, making a violent effort to contain himself; "you?" "You will beat me, also, is it not so?"

"No! but if you speak of La Louve, I'll thrash Nicolas; now go on: it is your affair, and his also."

"You," cried the enraged bandit, raising his dangerous knife; "you thrash me!" "Nicolas, no knife!" cried the widow, endeavouring to seize the arm of her son; but he, drunk with wine and anger, pushed his mother rudely on one side, and rushed at his brother. Martial fell back quickly, seized his heavy knotted stick, and put himself on the defensive. "Nicolas, no knife!" repeated the widow. "Let him alone!" cried Calebasse, arming herself with a hatchet. Nicolas, brandishing his formidable knife, watched a favourable moment to throw himself on his brother. "I tell you," cried he, "that you and your 'canaille' of a Louve, I'll crush you both; and I commence. Now, mother—now, Calebasse! let us cool him; this has lasted too long!" And, believing the time favourable for his attack, the brigand rushed toward his brother with his knife raised.

Martial, very expert with a club, retreated quickly, lifted his stick, made a quick turn with it in the air, describing the figure eight, and let it fall heavily on the arm of Nicolas, who, hurt severely, dropped his knife. "Brigand, you have broken my arm!" cried he, taking hold of his arm with his left hand.

"No, I felt my club rebound," answered Martial, kicking the knife under the table. Then, profiting by the situation of Nicolas, he took him by the collar, pushed him roughly backward towards the door of the little cellar, opened it with one hand, and with the other threw him in and shut the door.

Returning afterward to the two women, he took Calebasse by the shoulders, and, in spite of her resistance, her cries, and a blow from the hatchet which wounded him slightly in the hand, he locked her in the lower room of the tavern which was adjoining the kitchen; then, addressing the widow, still stupefied at this manoeuvre, as skillful as it was unexpected, he said, coldly, "Now, mother, for us two." "Well! yes; for us two," cried the widow, and her stoical face became animated, her wan complexion became suffused, her eyes sparkled, anger and hatred gave a terrible character to her features. "Yes; now for us two!" said she, in a threatening tone; "I expected this moment—you shall know at last what I have in my heart." "And I also—I will tell you." "If you live a hundred years, you shall recollect this night." "I shall remember it! My brother and sister wished to murder me; you did nothing to prevent it. But come—speak: what have you against me?"

"What have I?" "Yes." "Since the death of your father, you have done nothing but cowardly acts!" "I?" "Yes, coward! Instead of staying with us to sustain us, you fled to Rombouillet, to poach in the woods with the game pedler you knew at Beroz." "If I had remained here, I should now have been at the galleys, like Ambroise, or ready to go, like Nicolas; I did not wish to be a robber like the others—thence your hatred." "And what was your trade? You stole game; you stole fish; no danger in that, coward?" "Fish, as well as game, belong to no one; to-day in one place, to-morrow in another; it is for who can get it. I do not steal; as for being a coward—" "You fight, for money, men who are weaker than you are!" "Because they have beaten those who are weaker than they are." "Trade of a coward! trade of a coward!" "There are none honest, it is true; it is not for you to tell me of it!" "Why have you not followed these honest callings, instead of lounging here and living at my expense?" "I give you the first fish I take, and what money I have—it is not much, but it is enough. I cost you nothing. I have tried to be a locksmith, to gain more; but when one from his infancy has idled on the river and in the woods, one can't do anything else; it is done for life. And, besides, I have always preferred to live alone, on the river or in the woods; there no one questions me. Instead of that, in other places, if any one should ask me of my father, must I not answer—guillotined! of my brother—galley-slave! of my sister—thief!" "And of your mother, what would you say?"

"I'd say she was dead." "And you would do well; it is all as—I disown you, coward! Your brother is at the galleys! Your grandfather and father have bravely finished on the scaffold, in defying the priest and the executioner! Instead of avenging them, you tremble!" "Avenge them?" "Yes, to show yourself a real *Martial*, spit on the knife of Charlot and his red cap, and finish like father and mother, brother and sister." "As habituated as *Martial* was to the ferocious bombast of his mother, he could not refrain from shuddering.

She resumed, with increasing fury, "Oh! coward, still more 'crétur' than coward! You wish to be honest!! Honest? is it that you shall not always be despised, as the son of a murderer, brother of a galley-slave; but you, instead of hugging vengeance, you are afraid! instead of biting, you fly; when they cut off your father's head, you left us, coward! And you knew we could not leave the island without being hunted and howled after like mad dogs—oh! they shall pay for it, they shall pay for it!"

"One man—ten men can't make me afraid! but to be pointed at by everybody as the son and brother of condemned criminals—well, no! I could not stand it. I preferred to go and poach with Pierre, the game-seller." "Why did you not remain in your woods?" "I came back on account of my affair with the guard, and, above all, on account of the children; because they were of an age to be ruined by bad example!" "What is that to you?" "To me? because I do not wish to see them become like Ambroise, Nicolas, and Calebasse."

"Not possible!" "And alone, with you all, they would not have failed. I made myself an apprentice to try to earn something, to take

them with me, and leave the island; but at Paris every one knew it; it was always, son of the 'guillotined'—brother of the galley-slave. I had continual fights. It tired me."

"And that did not tire you to be honest; that succeeded so well, instead of having the heart to return to us, to do as we do—as the children shall do in spite of you—yes, in spite of you. You think you will stuff them with your preachings; but we are there. François already belongs to us—nearly—the first obsession, and he shall be of the band."

"I tell you no." "You will see. I know it. There is vice at the bottom; but you restrain him. As to *Amantine*, when she is once fifteen, she will go alone. Ah! they have thrown stones at us. Ah! they have hunted us like mad dogs! They shall see what our family is—except you, coward; for here you alone make us blush!"

"It is a pity." "And as you may be spoiled here with us, to-morrow you will go from this never to return."

Martial looked at his mother with surprise; after a moment's pause he said, "You tried to get up a quarrel at supper to arrive at this."

"Yes, to show you what you may expect if you will stay here in spite of us—a hell—do you understand?—a hell upon earth! Every day disputes, blows, fights; and we shall not be alone like to-night; we will have friends to help us; you'll not hold on a week."

"You think to frighten me?" "I tell you what will happen to you." "No matter. I remain."

"You will remain here?" "Yes." "In spite of us?" "In spite of you, and Calebasse, and Nicolas, and all others of the same kidney!" "Stop; you make me laugh."

"I tell you I'll remain here until I find the means to earn my living elsewhere with the children; alone, I should not be embarrassed. I should return to the woods; but, on their account, I want more time to find out what I want. Until then I remain."

"Ah! you remain until you can take away the children?" "As you say!" "Take away the children?" "When I say to them come, they will come, and running too, I answer for it."

The widow shrugged her shoulders, and replied,

"Listen to me. I told you just now, if you were to live a thousand years, you would remember this night. I am going to explain to you why; but once more, have you well decided not to go?" "Yes! yes! a thousand times, yes!" "Directly you will say no! a thousand times, no! Listen to me well. Do you know what trade your brother follows?"

"I suspect, but I don't want to know." "You shall know. He steals." "So much the worse for him." "And for you." "For me?" "He is a burglar, a galley affair; we receive his plunder; if it is discovered, we shall be condemned to the same punishment as receivers, and you also; the family will be carried off, and the children will be turned into the streets, where they will learn the trade of your father and grandfather quite as well as here."

"I arrested as a receiver, as your accomplice! On what proof?"

"No one knows how you live; you are a vagrant on the water—you have the reputation of a bad man—you live with us. Who will you make believe that you are ignorant of our doings?"

"I will prove to the contrary. We will accuse you as our accomplice." "Accuse me! why?" "To reward you for remaining here in spite of us." "Just now you wished to alarm me in one way; now it is in another: that don't take. I shall prove that I have never stolen. I remain." "Ah! you remain? Listen, then, once more: do you remember what happened last Christmas night?" "Christmas night?" said Martial, endeavoring to collect his thoughts. "Recollect well." "I do not recollect." "You do not remember that Bras-Rouge brought here at night a man well dressed, who wished to be concealed?" "Yes, now I remember; I went up stairs to bed, and I left him at supper with you. He passed the night here; before daylight Nicolas took him to Saint Ouen."

"You are sure Nicolas took him to Saint Ouen?"

"You told me so the next morning." "Christmas night you were then here?" "Yes. Well?" "On that night, that man, who had much money with him, was killed in this house." "He! Here? And robbed, and buried in the little woodhouse. It is not true," cried Martial, becoming pale with alarm, and not willing to believe in this new crime of his kindred. "You wish to alarm me. Once more I say it is not true?" "Ask your protégé, François, what he saw this morning in the woodhouse?" "François! and what did he see?" "One of the feet of the man sticking out of the ground. Take the lantern; go there and satisfy yourself." "No," said Martial, wiping the cold sweat from his brow. "No, I do not believe you. You tell me that to—?" "To prove to you that, if you live here in spite of us, you run the risk every moment to be arrested as an accomplice in murder and robbery. You were here Christmas night; we will say how you gave us your aid: how can you prove the contrary?" "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" said Martial, hiding his face in his hands. "Now will you go?" said the widow, with a sarcastic smile.

Martial was thunderstruck; he did not doubt the truth of what his mother had said; the roving life he led; his residence with a family so criminal, might cause heavy suspicions to fall upon him, and these might be changed into certainties in the eyes of justice, if his mother, his brother, his sister pointed to him as their accomplice. The widow enjoyed the situation of her son.

"You have the means to escape from this; denounce us!"

"I ought to do it, but I shall not; you know it well!"

"It is for this I have told you all. Now will you go?"

Martial tried to soften his mother; with a mellowed voice he said, "Mother, I do not believe you capable of this murder." "As you like, but go away." "I will go on one condition." "No conditions." "You will place the children as apprentices far from this, in the provinces." "They shall remain here." "Come now, mother; when you have made them like Nicolas, Amboise, father—what good will it answer you?"

"To do some good business with their aid. We are not yet too many. Calebasse remains here with me to keep the tavern. Nicolas is alone; once taught, François and Amandine will help him; they throw stones at them also, children as they were: they must revenge themselves!"

"Mother, you love Calebasse and Nicolas, don't you?"

"What then?" "They go to the scaffold like father."

"What then, what then?" "And does not their fate make you tremble?" "Their fate shall be mine—neither better nor worse. I steal, they steal; I kill, they kill. Who takes the mother will take the children. We will not be separated. If our heads fall, they shall fall in the same basket, where they will say adieu! We will not turn back; you are the only coward in the family; we drive you away. Get out!"

"But the children? the children?"

"The children will grow up; I tell you, except for you, they would have been already formed. François is almost ready; when you are gone, Amandine shall make up for lost time."

"Mother, I entreat you, consent to send the children away as apprentices far from here."

"How many times must I tell you that they are in apprenticeship here?"

The widow articulated these words in such a stern manner, that Martial lost all hope of softening this heart of bronze.

"Since it is thus," said he, in a resolute and brief tone, "listen to me in your turn, mother: I remain."

"Ah! ah!" "Not in this house. I should be murdered by Nicolas, or poisoned by Calebasse; but, as I have not the means to lodge elsewhere, the children and I will live in the hovel at the other end of the island: the door is strong; I will make it stronger. Once there, well barricaded, with my gun, my dog, and my club, I fear no one. To-morrow morning I will take away the children; they will come with me, sometimes in my boat, sometimes on the mainland. At night they shall sleep near me in the cabin: we will live on my fishing. This shall continue until I find a place for them; and I will find one." "Ah! is it so?" "Neither you, nor my brother, nor Calebasse can prevent it. If your thefts and your murders are discovered while I am still on the island, so much the worse; I must run my chance! I shall explain that I returned; that I remained on account of the children, to prevent their becoming rogues. They can judge. But may the thunder crush me if I leave this island, and if the children remain one day more in this house! Yes, and I defy you—defy you and yours to drive me from the island!" The widow knew the resolution of Martial; the children loved their eldest brother as much as they feared him; they would follow him then without hesitation when he wished it. As to him, well armed, resolute, always on his guard; in his boat during the day; barricaded during the night in his cabin, he had nothing to fear from any evil designs of his family. The project of Martial could then, on all points, be realized. But the widow had many reasons to prevent the execution.

In the first place, like as honest artisans consider sometimes the number of their children as riches, on account of their services, so the widow counted on Amandine and François to assist her in her crimes. Then, what she had said of her desire to avenge her husband and her son was true. Certain beings, nursed, become aged, hardened in crime, enter into open revolt, into a murderous warfare against society, and believe by new acts of guilt to avenge themselves for

the just punishment which has overtaken them and theirs. And then, in fine, the wicked designs of Nicolas against Fleur de Marie, and still later against the diamond broker, might be defeated by the presence of Martial. The widow had hoped to bring about an immediate separation between herself and Martial, either by fomenting the quarrel with Nicolas, or by revealing to him what risk he ran by remaining on the island. As cunning as she was acute, the widow, perceiving that she was mistaken, felt that it was necessary to have recourse to perfidy to entrap her son in a bloody snare. She resumed then, after a long silence, and with affected bitterness: "I see your plan; you do not wish to denounce us yourself—you wish to do it through the children." "I?" "They know now that there is a man buried here; they know that Nicolas has stolen: once in apprenticeship, they will speak; we shall be taken, and we shall all be executed—you as well as we; that's what will happen if I listen to you—if I allow you to place the children elsewhere. And yet you say you don't wish us any harm! I do not ask you to love me; but do not hasten the moment when we shall be taken." The softened tone of the widow made Martial believe that his threats had produced a salutary effect: he fell into a frightful snare.

"I know the children," replied he. "I am sure, if I tell them to say nothing, they will be quiet; besides, I shall always be with them, and will answer for their silence."

"Can any one answer for the words of a child? at Paris, above all, where people are so curious and talkative? It is as much to keep them silent as to aid us that I wish to keep them here." "Do they not go to the village and to Paris now? Who prevents them from speaking, if they wish to speak? If they were far away from here, so much the better: what they might say would be of no consequence." "Far from here! and where is that?" said the widow, looking steadily at her son.

"Let me take them away; no consequence to you."

"How would you live?" "My old 'bourgeois' locksmith is a good man. I will tell him what is necessary, and perhaps he will lend me something on account of the children; with that I'll go and bind them out far away from this. We set out in two days, and you will never hear more of us."

"No; I prefer to have them with me. I shall be more sure of them." "Then I establish myself to-morrow at the hovel, waiting for something better. I have a head also, and you know it." "Yes, I know it. Oh, how I wish to see you far away from this! Why did you not stay in your woods?"

"I offer to rid you both of myself and the children."

"You would leave La Louve, then—she whom you love so well?"

"That's my business: I know what I have to do; I have a plan."

"If I let you take them away, will you never return to Paris?"

"In three days we will be off, and like the dead for you."

"I prefer to have it so rather than you should always be here, and be suspicious of them. Come, since it must be so, take them away, and clear out as soon as possible, that I may never see you again." "Is this settled?" "It is.

Give me the key of the cellar, so that I can release Nicolas."

"No; he can sleep off his wine there." "And Calebasse?" "It is different. You can open the door after I have gone to bed; it makes me feel bad to see her." "Go; and may the devil confound you!" "It is your good-night, mother." "Yes." "Happily, it will be the last," said Martial.

"The last," replied the widow. Her son lighted a candle, and, opening the kitchen door, whistled to his dog, which came bounding in, and followed his master to the upper story of the mansion. "Go! your account is finished," muttered the mother, shaking her fist at her son, who had just gone up stairs: "you have brought it upon yourself." Then, assisted by Calebasse, who went to look for a bunch of false keys, the widow picked the lock of the cellar where Nicolas was confined, and set him at liberty.

CHAPTER VII. IV

FRANÇOIS AND AMANDINE.

FRANÇOIS and Amandine slept in a room situated immediately over the kitchen, at the extremity of a corridor, into which opened several other rooms, serving as "cabinets de société" to the frequenters of the tavern. After having partaken of their frugal supper, instead of extinguishing their lantern, according to the orders of the widow, the two children had watched, leaving their door open, to see Martial when he should come to his room. Placed on a rickety stool, the lantern shed a sickly light through the miserable room. Walls of plaster, a cot for François, a child's bedstead, very old and much too short for Amandine, a heap of broken chairs and benches, the result of some of the drunken brawls and turbulent conduct which had taken place at the tavern of the "Ile du Ravageur," such was the interior of this den.

Amandine, seated on the edge of the cot, tried to dress her head à la marmotte, with the stolen foulard, the gift of her brother Nicolas. François, kneeling, presented a fragment of looking-glass to his sister, who, with her head half turned round, was occupied in tying the ends of the foulard into a large rosette. Very attentive, and very much struck with this coiffure, François neglected for a moment to hold the glass in such a position that his sister could see. "Raise the glass higher, now—I cannot see; there—so—good. Wait a little; now I have finished. Look! how do you think it looks?" "Oh, very well! very well! Dieu! what a fine rosette! You'll make one just like it with my cravat, won't you?"

"Yes, directly; but let me walk a little. You go before—backward; hold the glass up, so that I can see myself as I walk." François executed this difficult manœuvre very well, to the great satisfaction of Amandine, who strutted up and down triumphantly, under the rosette and horns of her foulard. Very innocent and "naïve" under any other circumstances, this conduct became culpable, as François and Amandine both knew the foulard was stolen: another proof of the frightful facility with which children, even well endowed, are corrupted almost without knowing it, when they are continually plunged in a criminal atmosphere.

And, besides, the sole Master of these little

unfortunates, their brother Martial, was not himself irreproachable, as we have said: incapable of committing a theft or murder, he did not the less lead an irregular and wandering life. * * * They refused to commit certain bad actions, not from honesty, but to obey Martial, whom they tenderly loved, and to disobey their mother, whom they feared and hated. * * * It is hard to say how much the perceptions of morality with these children were doubtful, vacillating, precarious; with François particularly, arrived at that dangerous period where the mind, hesitating, undecided, between good and evil, perhaps in one moment may be lost or saved. * * * "How this red foulard suits you, sister!" said François. "How pretty it is! When we shall go to play on the shore in front of the plaster-kilns, you must dress yourself so, to make the children mad, who are always throwing stones at us, and calling us little *guillemottes*. I'll put on my fine red cravat, and we will tell them, 'Never mind, you haven't such handsome handkerchiefs as these!'"

"But, I say, François," said Amandine, after a pause, "if they knew that these foulards were stolen, they would call us little thieves." "Who cares if they do!"

"When it is not true, it's all the same; but now—"

"Since Nicolas has given us these, we have not stolen them."

"Yes, but he did; he took them from a boat; and our brother Martial says we must not steal."

"But since it is Nicolas who has stolen them, it is none of our business." "You think so, François?" "Yes I do." "Yet it seems to me that I should have preferred that the person to whom they belonged should have given them to us. Don't you think so, François?" "Oh, it's all the same to me. They have been given to us, and that's enough." "You are very sure?"

"Why, yes, yes; do be quiet!" "Then, so much the better; we have not done what brother Martial forbids, and we have fine handkerchiefs." "I say, Amandine, if he knew that, the other day, Calabasse made you take that 'fichu' from the pedler's pack, when his back was turned."

"Oh, François, do not speak of that!" said the poor child, whose eyes were filled with tears: "my brother Martial would love me no more. Do you see, he would leave us all alone here." "Don't be afraid, I will not tell him," he said, laughing. "Oh, don't laugh at that, François; I am sorry enough; but I had to do it. My sister pinched me till the blood came, and then she looked at me so—so; and yet twice my heart failed me; I thought I could never do it. Finally, the pedler saw nothing, and my sister kept the fichu. If he had seen me, François, they would have put me in prison."

"They did not see you; it is just the same as if you had not stolen." "You think so?" "Pardi!" "And in prison how unhappy one must be!" "Ah, well, yes; on the contrary—"

"How, François, on the contrary?" "Look here! you know the big lame man who lives at Paris with the Père Micou; the man who sells for Nicolas; who keeps furnished lodgings, Passage de la Brasserie?" "A big lame man?"

"Why, yes; who came here at the end of the autumn, on the part of the Père Micou, with a man with monkeys, and two women." "Ah, yes, yes; the lame man who spent so much money?" "I think so; he paid for everybody."

"Do you recollect the excursion on the water?"

"I went with them, and the man with the monkeys took his organ on board to have some music in the boat." "And then, at night, what fine fireworks they had, François!" "Yes; and he was no miser; he gave me ten sous! He drank nothing but sealed wine; they had chickens at all their meals; they had at least eighty francs' worth." "As much as that, François?" "Oh, yes." "He was very rich, then?" "Not at all; what he spent was the money which he earned in prison, from whence he just came."

"He gained all that money in prison?" "Yes; he said he had seven hundred francs left; that when all was gone, he would do some good job, and if they took him, he didn't care, because he would return to the prison and join his good friends there." "He wasn't afraid of the prison, then, François?" "Just the contrary; he told Calabasse that they were all jovial together; that he never had a better bed or better food than in prison; good meat four times a week, fire all winter, and a good sum when he came out, while there are so many stupid fools of honest workmen who were starving for want of work." "Did the lame man say that?" "I heard him; for I was rowing in the boat while he told this to Calabasse and the two women, who said it was the same thing in the prison for women; they had just come out." "But, then, François, it can't be so wicked to steal, if one is so well off in prison?" "Dame! I don't know; here, there is no one but brother Martial who says it is wrong to steal; perhaps he is mistaken." "Never mind, we must believe him, François; he loves us so much!" "He loves us, it is true; when he is here, no one dares to beat us. If he had been here to-night, mother wouldn't have whipped me. Old beast! ain't she wicked? Oh! I hate her—hate her. How I wish I was a man, to pay her back all the blows she has given me, and to you, who can't bear it as well as I can." "Oh! François, hush; you make me afraid, to hear you say that you would like to strike our mother!" cried the poor little thing, weeping, and throwing her arms around the neck of her brother, whom she embraced tenderly. "No, it is true," answered François, repulsing his sister gently: "why are my mother and Calabasse always so severe and cross to us?" "I do not know," said Amandine, wiping her eyes: "it is, perhaps, because they have guillotined our father, and sent Ambroise to the galleys." "Is that our fault?" "Mon Dieu, no; but what do you want?" "Ma foi, if I am always, always to receive such blows, in the end I would rather steal, as they wish me to; what good does it do me not to steal?"

"And Martial, what would he say?" "Oh! except for him I should have said 'yes' long ago, for I am tired of being flogged; now to-night, mother never was so wicked—she was like a fury—it was very dark, dark; she said not a word. I only felt her cold hand, which held me by the neck, while with the other she beat me, and I thought I saw her eyes glisten." "Poor François! because you said you saw a dead man's bones in the woodhouse?" "Yes, a foot which stuck out of the earth," said François, shuddering with affright: "I am sure of it." "Perhaps formerly there was a burying-ground here?" "Must think so; but then, why did our mother say she would whip me again if I spoke of it to Martial? I tell you what, it is, likely, some one who has been killed in a dispute, and who has been buried there so it should not be known."

"You are right; for, do you remember, such a thing once liked to have happened?" "When was that?" "You know the time that M. Barbillion struck the man with the knife—the tall man, who is so thin, so thin that he shows himself for money?" "Ah! yes, the *walking skeleton*, as they called him; mother came and separated them, otherwise Barbillion would, perhaps, have killed the great skeleton! did you see how he foamed, and how his eyes stuck out of his head?" "Oh, he is not afraid to stick a knife into you for nothing." "He is a mad-cap." "Oh! yes, so young, and so wicked, François!"

"Tortillard is much younger, and he would be quite as bad, if he had the strength." "Oh! yes, he is very bad. The other day he struck me because I would not play with him." "He struck you? good—the first time he comes—" "No, no, François, it was only in fun." "You are sure?" "Yes, very sure." "Very well—or—but I do not know where he gets so much money from; when he came here with La Chouette, he showed us some gold pieces of twenty francs." "How impudent he looked when he told us, 'You could have the just same if you were not little *sinves*.'"

"Sinves?" "Yes, in 'Argot' that means stupid fools."

"Ah, yes! true." "Forty francs—in gold—how many fine things I would buy with that! And you, Amandine?"

"Oh! I likewise." "And what would you buy?"

"Let me see," said the child, in a meditative manner; "in the first place I would get a warm coat for my brother Martial, so that he should not be cold in his boat."

"But for yourself—for yourself?" "I would like a little 'Jesus,' in wax, with his lamb and his cross, like the plaster man had on Sunday, you know, at the door of the Church of Asnières?" "I hope no one will tell mother and Calebasse that they saw us at church."

"True, she has so often forbidden us to enter one. It is a pity, for a church is very nice inside, is it not François?"

"Yes, what fine candlesticks!" "And the picture of the Holy Virgin—how good she looks."

"And the fine lamps—did you see? and the fine cloth on the table at the end, where the priest said mass, with his two friends dressed like himself, and who gave him water and wine?"

"Say, François, do you recollect last year, at the Fête-Dieu, when we saw from here all the little communicants, with their white veils, pass over the bridge?"

"What handsome flowers they had?" "How they sang, and held the ribands of their banners?" "And how the silver fringes of the banners glistened in the sun? That must have cost a deal of money!" "Mon Dieu—how handsome it was, 'heir' François?" "I think so, and the communicants with their badges of white satin on the arm, and their wax candles with velvet and gold handles?"

"The little boys had their banners also, did they not, François?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! was I not whipped that day because I asked my mother why we did not walk in the procession like other children?" "Then it was that she told us never to enter a church, unless it was to steal the money-box for the poor, or from the pockets of people listening to mass," added Calebasse, laughing and showing her old, yellow teeth. "Bad creature—get out!" "Oh,

as for that, to steal in a church, they should kill me first—don't you say so, François?" "There, or elsewhere, what is the difference when one once has decided?" "Dame! I do not know—I should have more fear; I never could."

"On account of the priests?" "No; perhaps on account of the picture of the Holy Virgin, who looks so good and kind." "What of that—the picture can't eat you, little fool!" "True, but I could not. It is not my fault." "Speaking of priests, Amandine, do you remember the day when Nicolas struck me so hard, because he saw me bow to the caré who was passing on the shore? I had seen him saluted—I did the same; I did not think there was any harm." "Yes, but this time Martial said just the same as Nicolas, that we had no need to make a salute to a priest."

At this moment François and Amandine heard some one walk in the corridor.

Martial reached his chamber without any farther trouble, after his conversation with the widow, believing Nicolas locked up until the next morning. Seeing a ray of light issuing from the door of the children's room, he went in. They both ran to him and embraced him tenderly. "How, have you not yet gone to bed, little chatters?"

"No, brother—we waited for you to come and say good-night," said Amandine. "And, besides, some one talking very loud, down stairs, as if it was a quarrel," added François.

"Yes," said Martial, "I had a dispute with Nicolas, but it is nothing; besides, I am glad to find you up. I have some good news to tell you." "Us, brother?" "Would you like to go with me away from here—far away?" "Oh yes, brother!" "Well! in two or three days, we will, all three of us, leave the island."

"How glad I am!" cried Amandine, clapping her hands.

"But where shall we go to?" asked François.

"You shall see, inquisitive; but never mind, wherever we go, you shall learn a good trade, which will make you able to earn your living—that is sure." "Shall I not go any more fishing with you, brother?" "No, my boy; you shall go as an apprentice to a cabinetmaker or locksmith; you are strong, active; with courage and in working hard, at the end of a year you will be able to earn something; oh, come, now, what is the matter—you do not appear to be pleased?"

"It is, brother, that—I—" "Well, go on."

"Would rather remain with you, and fish, mend your nets, than to learn a trade." "Really?" "Dame! to be shut up in a shop all day, so gloomy; and then to be an apprentice, it is so tiresome." Martial shrugged his shoulders.

"You would rather be idle, a vagabond, a rover, is it not so?" said he, severely, "while waiting to become a robber."

"No, brother, but I would rather live here with you, as we live here; that's all." "Yes, that's it—to eat, drink, sleep, and amuse yourself with fishing, like a bourgeois?"

"I like that better." "It is very probable; but you must like something else. Look here, my poor François, it is high time that I take you from this place; without knowing it, you will become as bad as the others. Mother was right—I am afraid you are rather vicious. And you, Amandine, don't you wish to learn a trade?"

"Oh! yes, brother. I would rather learn one than to stay here. I shall be so glad to go away with you and François."

"But what have you got on your head?" said Martial, remarking the triumphant head-dress of Amandine.

"A foulard which Nicolas gave me."

"He gave me one, also," said François, proudly.

"And where did they come from? It would surprise me if Nicolas should have bought them for you." The two children hung their heads, without replying. After a moment's pause, François said, resolutely, "Nicolas gave them to us; we don't know where they came from; is it not so, Amandine?" "No, no, brother!" answered she, stammering and blushing, and not daring to raise her eyes.

"Do not tell a lie!" said Martial; severely.

"We do not lie!" added François, boldly.

"Amandine, my child, tell the truth," said Martial, gently. "Well! to tell the whole truth," answered Amandine, timidly, "they came from a box of goods which Nicolas brought to-night in his boat." "And which he has stolen?" "I think so, brother, from a galley." "Do you see, François! you told a lie," said Martial. The boy held down his head, without answering. "Give me the foulard, Amandine; give me yours also, François!" The little girl took off her head-dress, took a last look at the enormous rosette, and gave it to Martial, stifling a sigh of regret. François drew his slowly from his pocket, and, like his sister, returned it to Martial. "To-morrow morning," said he, "I will give these to Nicolas; you should not have taken them, my children; to profit by a theft is the same as if one were the thief."

"It's a pity—they are so handsome!" said François.

"When you have learned a trade, and you earn some money, you can buy some quite as handsome. Come, go to bed, it is late, my children." "You are not angry, brother?" said Amandine, timidly. "No, no, my girl, it is not your fault. You live with rogues—you do as they do without knowing it. When you are with honest people, you will do as they do; and you soon shall be there—or the 'diable m'emportera.' Good-night!"

"Good-night, brother!" and, embracing them both, Martial departed. "What is the matter, then, François? you look so sad!" said Amandine.

"Brother has taken my foulard, and, besides, did you not hear?" "What?" "He wants to make us apprentices." "Are you not glad?" "Ma foi, no." "You would rather remain here and be beaten every day?" "I am beaten; but I don't have to work. I am all day in the boat, or fishing, or playing, or serving the company, who sometimes give me something for drink, as the lame man did; it is much more amusing than to be shut up from morning to night in a shop, to work like a dog." "But did you not hear? brother said if we remained here any longer we would become bad!" "Ah, bah! all the same to me, since the other children call us already little thieves, little guillotines. And, then, to work—it is too tiresome." "But here they always beat us! They beat us, because we listen more to Martial than to them." "He is so good to us!" "He is good, he is good, I do not deny; so I love him well. They do not dare to harm us before him; he takes us out to walk, it is true, but that is all; he never gives us anything." "Dame! he has nothing; what he earns he gives to our mother for board." "Nicolas has something; I am sure that if we were to listen

to him and mother, he would not treat us so; he would give us fine things like to-day; he would no longer suspect us; we should have money like Tortillard." "But, mon Dieu, for that we should have to steal! and that would cause our brother Martial so much sorrow!" "Well! so much the worse!"

"Oh! François—and besides, if they caught us, we should go to prison." "To be in prison, or to be shut up all day in a shop, is the same thing. Besides, the lame man said they amused themselves so much in prison." "But the sorrow we would cause to Martial—don't you think of that? It is on our account he came back here, and now remains; for himself alone, he could easily get along; he could return and poach in the woods he likes so well." "Well! let him take us in the woods with him," said François; "that would be best of all; I would be with him I love so much, and I should not have to work at a trade I cannot bear." The conversation of François and Amandine was interrupted. Their door was locked on the outside with a double turn.

"We are shut up!" cried François. "Ah! mon Dieu, what for, brother? What are they going to do with us?" "Perhaps it is Martial." "Listen, listen, his dog barks!" said Amandine. "It sounds to me as if they were hammering something," said François; "perhaps they are trying to break open Martial's door!" "Yes, yes, his dog barks all the time." "Listen, François! now it sounds like driving nails. Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! I am afraid. What could our brother have done? now hear how his dog howls!" "Amandine, I hear nothing now," said François, approaching the door. The two children, holding their breath, listened with anxiety.

"Now they return," said François, in a low tone, "I hear them walking in the corridor." "Let us jump into bed, mother would kill us if she found us up," said Amandine. "No!" answered François, still listening: "they have just passed our door; they are running down stairs; now they open the kitchen door." "You think so?" "Yes, yes; I know the noise it makes." "Martial's dog keeps on howling," said Amandine; then, suddenly, she cried, "François! my brother calls us." "Martial?" "Yes; don't you hear him?" And, notwithstanding the thickness of the two closed doors, the stentorian voice of Martial, calling to the children, could be heard. "Mon Dieu! we cannot go to him—we are locked up," said Amandine: "they wish to do him some harm, since he calls to us."

"Oh! as for that—if I could prevent them," cried François, resolutely, "I would prevent them, if they were to cut me to pieces! But our brother does not know that we are locked up; he will think that we will not help him; call to him, François, that we are shut up!"

He was about to follow the advice of his sister, when a violent blow shook the blind on the outside of the little window of their room. "They are coming that way to kill us!" cried Amandine, and, in her fright, she threw herself on the bed, and covered her face with her hands.

François remained immovable, although he partook of the alarm of his sister. Yet, after the violent blow of which we have spoken, the blind was not opened; the most profound silence reigned throughout the house.

Martial had ceased to call the children.

Somewhat recovered, and excited by a lively curiosity, François ventured to half open the

“window, and tried to see without, through the slats of the blinds.

“Take care, brother,” whispered Amandine, who, on hearing François open the window, had partly raised herself up. “Do you see anything?” “No; the night is too dark.” “Do you hear nothing?” “No; the wind blows too hard.” “Come back, come back, then!” “Ah! now I see something.” “What then?” “The light of a lantern; it comes and goes.” “Who carries it?” “I only see the light. Ah! now it comes nearer; some one speaks.” “Who is that?” “Listen, listen! it is Calebasse.” “What does she say?” “She tells them to hold firm the foot of the ladder.”

“Ah! do you see, it was in taking away the large ladder which was against our window, that they made such a noise just now.” “I hear nothing more.”

“What are they doing with the ladder now?”

“I can’t see anything more.” “Do you hear nothing?” “No.” “Mon Dieu, François, it is, perhaps, to get into our brother Martial’s room by the window that they have taken the ladder!” “That may be.”

“If you would open the shutter a little to see—”

“I dare not.” “Only a little.” “Oh! no, no. If my mother should see it—” “It is so dark there is no danger.” François, yielding to the entreaties of his sister, opened the blinds, and looked out. “Well, brother?” said Amandine, overcoming her fears, and approaching François on tiptoe. “By the light of the lantern,” said he, “I see Calebasse, who is holding the foot of the ladder; it is placed against Martial’s window.” “What then?”

“Nicolas goes up the ladder; he has his hatchet in his hands; I see it shine.” “Ah! you are not gone to bed! and you are spying us!” cried the widow suddenly, calling to François and his sister. Just as she was going into the kitchen, she saw the light from the half opened window. The unfortunate children had neglected to extinguish their light. “I am coming up,” added the widow in a terrible voice: “I am coming to you, little spies!”

Such are the events which took place at the Island of the Ravageurs the evening of the day previous to that on which Madame Séraphin was to conduct thither Fleur de Marie.

CHAPTER V.

FURNISHED LODGINGS.

THE “*Passage de la Brasserie*,” a dark and gloomy passage, and but little known, although situated in the centre of Paris, extended on one side from the “Rue Traversière Saint Honoré” to the “Cour Saint Guillaume” on the other. Towards the middle of this wet, muddy, dark, and gloomy street, where the sun scarcely ever penetrates, stood a furnished house (vulgarily called a “garni,” on account of the cheapness of its lodgings).

On a rascally-looking sign was to be seen, “Furnished rooms;” on the right of an obscure alley opened the door of a shop not less obscure, where the proprietor of the “garni” was generally to be found. This man, whose name has been several times mentioned at the “*Ile du Ravageur*,” was named Micou; openly he was a seller of old iron; but secretly he bought and sold

stolen metals, such as iron, lead, copper, and tin. To say that the Père Micou was in business and friendly relations with the Martials is sufficiently to appreciate his morality. * * *

The Père Micou was a fat man of about fifty years of age, with a low, cunning look, a pimply nose, and bloated cheeks; he wore an otter-skin cap, and was wrapped up in an old green “carri.” Over the little iron stove near which he was warming himself, a board with numbers painted on it, was nailed against the wall; there were suspended the keys of the rooms whose proprietors were absent. The window looking into the street was painted in such a manner that those without could not see what was going on within the shop; this window was heavily barred with iron. Throughout this large shop reigned great obscurity: to the damp and blackish walls were suspended rusty chains of all sorts and sizes; the floor was nearly covered with fragments and clippings of iron and lead. Three peculiar knocks at the door attracted the attention of the Père Micou.

“Come in!” cried he; and Nicolas appeared, the son of the widow of the condemned. He was very pale; his face seemed still more sinister-looking than the evening previous, and yet it will be seen he feigned a kind of noisy gaiety during the evening conversation. This scene took place the morning after his quarrel with his brother Martial.

“Ah! here you are, good fellow!” said the “logueur,” cordially. “Yes, Père Micou; I come to have some business with you.” “Shut the door, then; shut the door, then.”

“My dog and my little cart are there—with the thing.” “What do you bring me? du *gras double* (stolen sheet lead)?” “No, Père Micou.” “It is not ‘*ravageur*’? you are too cunning now; you are no longer a ‘*ravageur*,’ perhaps it is ‘*dur*’ (iron)?” “No, Père Micou; it is ‘*rouget*’ (copper)—four pigs. There must be at least 150 pounds; my dog has as much as he can draw.” “Go and bring the ‘*rouget*,’ we will weigh it.” “You must help me, Père Micou; I have a lame arm.” “What is the matter with your arm?” “Nothing—a bruise.” “You must make some iron red hot, put it into some water, and bathe your arm in this almost boiling water; it is a dealer in old iron’s remedy, but it is excellent.” “Thank you, Père Micou.” “Come, let us bring in the rouget; I will help you, lazy bones!” The pigs of copper were then brought in from a little cart drawn by an enormous dog, and placed in the shop. “That little cart is a good idea!” said the Père Micou, adjusting the scales.

“Yes; when I have anything to bring, I put my dog and cart into my boat, and I harness him when I land. A carriage might blab; my dog can’t blab.” “All well at home?” demanded the receiver, weighing the copper: “your mother and sister, are they in good health?”

“Yes, Père Micou.” “The children also?” “The children also.” “And your nephew André, where is he?” “Don’t speak of it! he was ‘en ribotte’ yesterday; Barbillion and the big lame man took him away; he only came back this morning; he is already gone on an errand to the postoffice, Rue Jean Jacques Rousseau.” “And your brother Martial, always savage?” “Ma foi, I do not know anything about him.” “How! you don’t know anything about him?” “No,” said Nicolas, affecting an indifferent manner; “for two days we have not seen him; perhaps he has returned to his old trade of a poach-

er—unless his boat, which was very old, has not sunk in the river, and he with—” “That don’t give you much concern, good for nothing, for you can’t feel it much!” “It is true, one has their own ideas. How many pounds of copper are there?” “You made a good guess—148 pounds, my boy.” “And you will owe me—”

“Exactly thirty francs.” “Thirty francs, when copper is twenty sous a pound? Thirty francs!”

“We will say thirty-five, and don’t blow, or I will send you to the devil—you, your copper, your dog, and your cart.” “But, Père Micou, you cheat me too much! there’s no sense in it.”

“Will you prove to me how this copper belongs to you, and I will give you fifteen sous a pound for it.” “Always the same song. You are all alike: get out, you nest of brigands! Can one gouge a friend in such style? But this is not all. If I take your merchandise in exchange, you should give me good measure at least!”

“Just so! What do you want? chains or cramp-irons for your boat?” “No; I want four or five iron plates, very strong, such as would answer to line window-shutters with.” “I have just what you want—the third of an inch thick: a pistol-ball could not go through.” “Just the thing!” “And of what size?”

“In all, seven or eight feet square.”

“Good! what else do you want?” “Three iron bars, three to four feet long, and two inches square.”

“I tore down the other day some grating from a window; that will suit you like a glove. What next?”

“Two strong hinges and a latch; to fix, and shut at will, a *souape* of two feet square.” “A trap, you mean to say?” “No; a *souape*.” “I cannot comprehend what you can want with a *souape*?” “That is possible, but I can.”

“Very well, you have only to choose; there are the hinges. What else do you need?” “That’s all.” “It is not much.” “Get my goods ready at once, Père Micou, I will take them as I pass; I have some more errands to do.” “With your cart? I say, farceur, I say a bale of goods in the bottom; is it something more that you have taken from everybody’s cupboard, little glutton?” “As you say, Père Micou; but you don’t eat this; don’t make me wait for my iron, for I must be back to the island by twelve o’clock.”

“Don’t be uneasy, it is eight o’clock; if you are not going far, in an hour you can return; all will be ready. Will you take a drop?” “To be sure; you can well afford to pay it!” The Père Micou took out of an old chest a bottle of brandy, a cracked glass, a cup without a handle, and poured out the liquor.

“Your health, Père Micou!” “Yours, my boy, and the ladies at home!” “Thank you; and your *garni* comes on well?” “So so. I have always some lodgers for whom I fear the visits of the ‘Commissaire,’ but they pay more in consequence.” “Why?” “How stupid you are! Sometimes I lodge as I buy; to such I no more ask for their passports than I ask you for an invoice.” “Understood! but to those you let as dear as you buy of me cheap.” “Must take care of one’s self. I have a cousin who keeps a fine ‘*hôtel garni*’ in the Rue Saint Honoré, while his wife is a mantuamaker, who employs as many as twenty assistants, either at her shop, or at their own homes.” “Say now, old obstinacy, there must be some pretty ones

there?” “I guess so! there are two or three that I have seen sometimes bringing in their work. Criminal! ain’t they nice! One little puss, who works at home, always laughing, and who is called Rigolette. Dieu de Dieu, my lark! what a pity I ain’t twenty!”

“Come, come, papa, put yourself out, or I’ll cry fire!” “But she is virtuous, my boy; she is virtuous.” “*Colasse*—get out! and you say that your cousin—” “Keeps a very good house, and; as she is of the same number as this little Rigolette—” “Virtuous!” “Exactly.” “*Colasse*!” “She will not have lodgers without passports or papers; but if any present themselves, knowing I am not very particular, she sends them to me.” “And they pay in consequence?”

“Always.” “But are they all friends of *la pégre* (thieving), those who have no papers?” “No; ah! now, speaking of that, my cousin sent me, a few days ago, a customer; may the devil burn me if I can understand it! Come, another turn?” “Agreed; the liquor is good; your health, Père Micou!” “Yours! garçon! I say, then, that the other day my cousin sent me a customer who I cannot comprehend. Just imagine a mother and her daughter, who had a very seedy look, it is true; they carried the baggage in a handkerchief; well! although they must, of course, be nobody, since they had no papers, and they lodge by the fortnight. Since they have been here they do not stir out; no one comes to see them, my *Amor*—no one; and yet, if they were not so this and so pale, they’d be two fine women, the little one above all! she is not more than fifteen or sixteen, at least; she is as white as a white rabbit, with large black eyes large as that—*Nom de nom*, what eyes! what eyes!”

“You’ll get on fire again; I’ll call the engines; and what do these women for a living?” “I tell you I comprehend nothing about it; they must be virtuous, and yet, no papers: without counting that they receive letters without address, their name must be bad to write.” “How is that?” “They sent, this morning, my nephew André to the office of the letters to be called for, to reclaim a letter addressed to Madame X. Z. The letter was to come from Normandy, from a place called the *Aubiers*. They wrote that on a piece of paper, so that André might get the letter. You see they can be no great things, women who take the name of an X and a Z.”

“They will never pay you.” “It is not for an old ape like me to learn to make faces. They have taken a room without a fireplace, for which I make them pay twenty francs a fortnight, and in advance. They are, perhaps, sick; for two days they have not come down. It certainly is not from indigestion, for I do not think they have cooked anything since they have been here.”

“If you only had such lodgers as the Père Micou—”

“That comes and goes; if I lodge people without passports, I lodge great folks also; I have, at this moment, two travelling clerks, a postoffice carrier, the leader of the orchestra of the ‘*Café des Aveugles*,’ and a ‘*rentière*’ (living on her income), all very genteel people; it is they who save the reputation of the house, if the ‘*Commissaire*’ wishes to examine too closely; they are not lodgers by night, not they; they are lodgers by the full light of the sun.” “Whenever it shines in your passage, Père Micou—” “Farceur, one more turn.” “And the last, for

"I must clear out. Apropos, Robin, the big lame man, does he lodge here yet?" "Up stairs, the next door to the mother and daughter. He has consumed all his prison money, and I believe he has none left." "I say, look out! he is in '*rue de ban*.'" "I know it well; but I can't get rid of him. I believe he is after something: little Tortillard, the son of Bras-Rouge, came here the other night with Barbillion to look for him. I am afraid he will do some harm to my good lodgers, this damnable Robin; as soon as his term is up, I shall put him out, telling him his room is engaged by an ambassador, or by the husband of Madame de Saint Ildefonso, my rentière." "A rentière?"

"I should think so! three rooms and a cabinet on the front, that is all, nearly furnished, without counting a garret for her '*bonne*' (female servant), eighty francs a month, and paid in advance by her uncle, to whom she gives one of her rooms as a stopping-place when he comes from the country. After all, I believe his country house is in the '*Rue Vivienne*,' '*Rue Saint Honoré*,' or in the environs of those places." "Understood! she is a rentière, because the old one pays her rents."

"Hush! here is her *bonne*!"

A woman rather advanced in life, wearing a white apron of doubtful purity, entered the shop of the "*revendeur*." "What can I do for you, Madame Charles?"

"Père Micou, your nephew is not here?"

"He has gone on an errand to the postoffice; he will soon return."

"M. Badinot wishes that he would take this letter to its address; there is no answer, but it is very urgent."

"In a quarter of an hour it shall be on the way."

"Let him hurry." "Be easy." The "*bonne*" retired.

"This is the '*bonne*' of one of your lodgers, Père Micou?" "Eh! no! '*colas*,' it is the *bonne* of my '*rentière*,' Madame Saint Ildefonso. But M. Badinot is her uncle; he came yesterday from the country," answered M. Micou; "but, see now, what fine acquaintances they have! I told you they were people of style: he writes to a vicomte."

"Ah, bah!" "Well, look: A. M. le Vicomte de Saint Remy, Rue de Chaillot. Très pressé, à lui-même. I hope that when one lodges '*rentières*' who have uncles who write to vicomtes, one can very well overlook a poor devil in the fourth story, who has no passport, hein?" "I think so. Well, good-by for the present, Père Micou; I am going to fasten my dog and cart to your door; I will carry what I have to carry myself. Have my goods and money ready on my return." "All shall be ready. But, I say, before you go I must tell you, since you have been here, I have watched you." "Well!" "I don't know, but you seem to have something the matter with you." "I?" "Yes." "You are a fool. If I have something—it is—that I am hungry."

"You are hungry! it is possible, but I should say that you wish to appear lively, and at the bottom there is something that bites and pinches you—*une puce à la muette* (conscience), as they say; and to trouble you, it must bite hard, for you are no prude."

"I tell you you are crazy, Père Micou," said Nicolas, shuddering in spite of himself. "One would say that you tremble." "It is my arm which pains me." "Then don't forget my re-

cipe, it will cure you." "Thank you, Père Micou—good-by," said Nicolas, taking his departure. The receiver, after having concealed the pigs of copper, bustled himself in collecting the different articles for Nicolas, when a new personage entered the shop. It was a man of about fifty years of age, with a fine and knowing face, with heavy gray whiskers and gold spectacles; he was dressed with some degree of *recherche*; the large sleeves of his brown paletot, with velvet cuffs, displayed his straw-coloured gloves; his boots undoubtedly the evening previous had been brilliantly polished.

Such was M. Badinot, the uncle of the "*rentière*," this Madame de Saint Ildefonso, whose social position was the pride and security of the Père Micou.

The reader will, perhaps, recollect that M. Badinot, formerly a lawyer, but driven from the bar, and now a "*chevalier d'industrie*," and agent of equivocal affairs, served as a spy for the Baron de Graün, and had given to this "*diplomate*" a great deal of information concerning several characters of this narration.

"Madame Charles has just given you a letter?" said M. Badinot to the "*receiver*." "Yes, monsieur; my nephew will soon return; in a moment he will be off again." "No, give me the letter. I have changed my mind: I will go myself to the Vicomte de Saint Remy," said Monsieur Badinot, emphasizing purposely this aristocratic address.

"Here is the letter, monsieur, have you no other commission?" "No, Père Micou," said M. Badinot, with a patronising air; "but I have reproaches to make to you." "To me, monsieur?" "Very grave reproaches." "How, monsieur?"

"Certainly Madame de Saint Ildefonso pays very dear for your first floor; my niece is one of those lodgers to whom one should pay the greatest respect; she came with confidence to this house, disliking the noises of the large streets: she hoped she would be here as in the country."

"And she is; just like a village. You ought to find it so—you, monsieur, who live in the country—it is just like a real village here!"

"A village? Very fine—always the most infernal noise." "Yet it is impossible to find a more quiet house; over madame, there is the leader of the orchestra of the Café des Areugles and a travelling clerk; over them another clerk; over him, again, there is—" "It is not of these persons I complain; they are very quiet; my niece finds no inconvenience from them; but in the fourth story there is a lame man whom Madame de Saint Ildefonso met yesterday drunk on the staircase; he uttered horrible, savage cries; she almost fainted, she was so much alarmed. If you think with such occupants your house resembles a village—" "Monsieur, I swear to you that I only wait an opportunity to put this lame man out of doors: he has paid me his term in advance, otherwise he would have been already shown how to get out." "You should not have taken him for a lodger."

"But I hope madame has no other cause of complaint? there is a penny-postman, who is the very cream of honest people; and, over him, along side of the lame man, a woman and her daughter, who keep as close as mice."

"I repeat, Madame de Saint Ildefonso only complains of the lame man; he is the nightmare of the whole house, that knave! and I warn you, if you keep him, he will cause all the re-

spectable people to leave." "I will send him off, be assured—I do not hold to him." "And you will do well, for they will not remain."

"Which would not answer my purpose. So, monsieur, you may regard the lame man as off, for he only has four days to remain here." "That is too many; however, it is your business. At the very first insult my niece leaves the house." "Be assured, monsieur—"

"All this is for your interest, mon cher; profit by it, for I only speak once," said M. Badinot, in a patronising manner, as he left the shop. Is it not needless for us to say that this woman and this young girl who lived so solitary, were the two victims of the cupidity of the notary? We will conduct the reader into the miserable room they occupied.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VICTIMS OF AN ABUSE OF CONFIDENCE.

Let the reader imagine a closet situated on the fourth story of the house in the *Passage de la Brasserie*.

A pale and gloomy light hardly penetrated this narrow apartment, through a little window of cracked, dirty glass, and a single shutter; a yellowish dilapidated paper covered the walls; from the broken ceiling hung long spider-webs. The floor, broken in several places, showed the beams and laths of the room below. A table of white wood, a chair, an old trunk without a lock, and a flock bed with coarse sheets and an old woollen covering, such was the furniture of this "garni." On the chair was seated Madame la Baronne de Fermont. In the bed reposed Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont (such were the names of the two victims of Jacques Ferrand).

Possessing but one narrow bed, the mother and daughter slept by turns, dividing thus the hours of the night. The mother had too much anguish, too many inquietudes, to get much repose; but the daughter found some moments of rest and forgetfulness.

She was now asleep. Nothing could be more touching, more sorrowful, than the sight of this misery imposed by the cupidity of the notary on two women, until then accustomed to the sweet enjoyments of a life of ease, and surrounded in their native town with that consideration which an honourable and honoured family always inspires.

Madame de Fermont was about thirty-six years of age; her countenance at once expresses mildness and excellence; her features, formerly of remarkable beauty, are now sadly changed; her black hair, divided on her forehead and confined behind her head, already shows some tresses of silver. Clothed in a dress of mourning, pierced in several places, Madame de Fermont, with her hand supporting her head, leaned against the wretched bed of her child, and regarded her with inexpressible anguish.

Claire was only sixteen; her complexion had lost its dazzling purity; her beautiful dark eye-lashes reached to her hollow cheeks. Once humid and rosy, but now dry and pale, her lips, half opened, displayed the enamel of her teeth: the rude contact of the bedclothes had given a red appearance in several places to the delicate neck, arms, and shoulders of the young girl. From time to time a slight shudder passed over her, as if she had some painful dream. For a long period Madame de Fermont had not wept;

she looked on her daughter with a dry and inflamed eye, consumed by a slow fever, which was undermining her. Each day she found herself weaker; but fearing to alarm Claire, and not willing, we may say, to alarm herself, she struggled with all her strength against the first symptoms of her sickness. Through motives of similar generosity, the daughter endeavoured to conceal her sufferings. These two unhappy creatures, afflicted with the same griefs, were yet to be afflicted with the same disease. In misfortunes there are often moments when the future prospect is so frightful, that the most energetic minds dare not look it in the face, but shut their eyes, and endeavour to deceive themselves by mad illusions. Such was the position of Madame and Mademoiselle de Fermont. To express the tortures of this woman, during the long hours when she was thus contemplating her sleeping child, thinking of the past, the present, and the future, would be to describe what, in the holy and sacred griefs of a mother, there is the most poignant, the most desperate, the most insane; enchanting recollections, sinister fears, terrible foresights, bitter regrets, extreme dejectedness, ejaculations of powerless rage against the author of so much misery, vain supplications, violent prayers, and, finally, frightful doubts of the all-powerful justice of him who remains inexorable to this cry, dragged from the bottom of the maternal heart—to this sacred cry of which the echo ought to reach Heaven: *Pity for my child!*

"How cold she is now!" said the poor mother, touching lightly the icy hand and arm of her daughter: "she is very cold; one hour ago she was burning; it is fever; happily, she does not know she has it. Mon Dieu, how cold she is! this covering is so thin! I would put my old shawl on the bed; but if I take it from the door, where I have hung it, some of those drunken men will come and look through the cracks, as they did yesterday. What a horrible house, mon Dieu! If I had known what kind of place it was before I paid in advance, we should not have staid here; but I did not know—when one has no papers—could I think that I should ever have need of a passport? When I left Angers in my own carriage—could I have thought—but this is infamous—because the notary has pleased to rob me, I am reduced to the most frightful extremity, and against him I can do nothing."

"Oh! this notary; he does not know the frightful consequences of his robbery. * * * Alas! yes, I never dare tell my child my fears—not to grieve her; but I suffer; I have a fever; I can hardly sustain myself; I feel within me the germs of a malady—dangerous, perhaps—my bosom is on fire; my heart throbs; mon Dieu! if I should fall sick—if I should die! No, no! I will not—I cannot die—leave Claire alone, abandoned in Paris—can it be possible? No! I am not sick, after all—what do I feel? a little heat, a heaviness about the head, caused, no doubt, from my uneasiness—from cold—oh! it is nothing serious."

"Come, come, no more of such weakness. Mon Dieu! it is by cherishing such ideas, it is in listening thus, that one falls really sick—and I have the time truly! must I not occupy myself in finding some work for Claire and myself, since this man, who gave us engravings to colour—" Then, after a pause, she added, with indignation,

"Oh! this is horrible! to give this work at the price of Claire's—to take from us this miserable means of existence, because I would not allow my child to go and work at his rooms! Perhaps we may find work elsewhere; but when one knows nobody, it is so difficult! When one is so miserably lodged they inspire no confidence; and yet, the small sum that remains once gone, what shall we do? what will become of us?"

"If the laws leave this crime unpunished, I will not—for, if fate pushes me to the end—if I do not find the means to emerge from the atrocious position in which this wretch has placed me and my child, I do not know what I shall do—I shall be capable of killing him—I—this man—then they can do what they will with me.

"Yes—but my child? my child?"

"To leave her alone, abandoned—ah! no, I do not wish to die; for this, I cannot kill this man. What would become of her? she, at sixteen—she is young, and pure as an angel; but she is handsome—but misery, hunger, abandonment—what may they not cause? and then—and then—into what abyss may she not fall?"

"Oh! it is frightful—poverty! frightful enough for any one; but, perhaps, more so for those who have always lived in opulence. I cannot beg—I must absolutely see my child starve before I can beg! What a coward—yet—"

Two or three violent knocks at the door made her tremble, and awoke her daughter with a start.

"Mon Dieu! mamma, what is that?" cried Claire, sitting up in bed; then throwing her arms around her mother's neck, who, very much alarmed, pressed her child to her bosom.

"Mamma, what is it, then?" repeated Claire.

"I do not know, my child; but do not be afraid, it is nothing; some one knocked; it is, perhaps, the letter we expect." At this moment the worm-eaten door shook again, under repeated blows with the fist.

"Who is there?" said Madame de Fermont in a trembling voice. A coarse, rough, rowdy voice answered, "Ah! ça, are you deaf, neighbours? ohé, neighbours! ohé!" "What do you want? monsieur, I do not know you," said Madame de Fermont, trying to conceal the agitation of her voice.

"I am Robin, your neighbour; give me some fire to light my pipe: come, houp! and make haste!"

"Mon Dieu! it is that lame man, who is always drunk," said the mother to her child. "Ah! ça, are you going to give me any fire? or I'll break all open, in the name of thunder!" "Monsieur, I have no fire." "You must have some matches, then; everybody has them; do you open—come?" "Monsieur, go away." "You won't open—once—twice?"

"I beg you to go away, or I will call." "Once—twice—three times—no, you won't? Then I'll break all down! hu! then." And the wretch gave such a furious kick against the door, he burst it in, the miserable lock breaking at the first assault. The two women screamed with alarm. Madame de Fermont, notwithstanding her weakness, threw herself before the bandit and barred his entrance. "Monsieur, this is outrageous: you shall not come in," cried the unhappy mother; "I shall cry for help." "For what—for what?" answered he: "mustn't we be neighbourly? If you had opened, I should not have broken in." Then, with the stupid ob-

stinacy of drunkenness, he added, staggering, "I wish to come in; I will come in, and I will not go out until I light my pipe." "I have neither fire nor matches. In the name of Heaven, monsieur, retire." "It's not true; you say that so I shan't see the little one in bed. Yesterday you stopped up all the holes in the door. She is pretty; I want to see her. Take care of your self, I'll scratch your face if you don't let me come in. I tell you that I will see the little one in bed, and I will light my pipe, or I'll smash everything, and you along with it!" "Help! mon Dieu! help!" cried Madame de Fermont, who felt the door giving way under a violent push of the lame man. Intimidated by these cries, the man stepped backward and shook his fist at Madame de Fermont, saying, "You shall pay me for this; I will return to-night—I'll catch hold of your tongue, and you cannot cry."

And the *gros boileaux* (big lame man), as they called him at the island of the Ravageurs, descended the stairs, uttering horrible oaths. Madame de Fermont, fearing that he might return, and seeing the lock broken, drew the table against the door to barricade it. Claire had been so alarmed at this horrible scene, that she had fallen on her cot almost without motion, with a violent attack of the nerves. Madame de Fermont, forgetting her own alarm, ran to her daughter, pressed her in her arms, made her drink a little water, and, with the most tender caresses, succeeded in calming her. "Be composed, my poor child—this bad man has gone away." Then the wretched mother cried, with a touching accent, "Yet it is this notary who is the cause of all our troubles. Compose yourself, my child," resumed she, tenderly embracing her daughter: "this wretch is gone." "Mon Dieu, mamma, if he should come back again? You see you have called for help, and no one has come. Oh! I entreat you; let us leave this house, I shall die here with fear." "How you tremble! you have a fever?" "No, no," said the young girl, to pacify her mother; "it is nothing; it is fright; it will pass over; and you, how are you? Give me your hands. Mon Dieu, how burning hot they are! Ah! you are suffering; you wish to conceal it from me."

"Do not think so: I am better than ever; it is the emotion which this man has caused me which makes me thus; I slept on the chair very soundly; I only awoke when you did."

"Yet, mamma, your poor eyes are very red, much inflamed!" "Ah! well, my child, on a chair, sleep is not so refreshing, you know!" "Really, do you not suffer?" "No, no, I assure you; and you?"

"Nor I; only I tremble still from fear. I entreat you, mamma, let us leave this house." "And where shall we go to? You know with how much trouble we found this wretched place; and, besides, we have paid two weeks in advance; they will not return us our money; and we have so little left—so little, that we should manage as closely as possible." "Perhaps some day M. de Saint Rémy will answer your letter." "I no longer hope it; it is so long since I have written." "He might not have received your letter; why do you not write him again? From hence to Angers is not so far; we shall soon have an answer."

"My poor child, you know how much this has cost me already." "What do you risk? he is so good, notwithstanding his roughness! Was he not one of my father's old friends? and, be-

sides, he is our relation. But he is poor himself; his fortune is very small. Perhaps he does not reply to avoid the mortification of being obliged to refuse us." "But if he has not received your letter, mamma?"

"And if he has received it, my child; of two things choose one: either he is in such a situation that he cannot come to our aid, or he feels no interest for us; then why expose ourselves to a refusal or a humiliation?"

"Come, courage, mamma, we have one hope left. Perhaps this morning will bring us a happy answer."

"From M. d'Orbigny? Without doubt. This letter of which you formerly made a draught, was so simple, so touching—exposed so naturally our misfortunes, that he will have pity on us. Really, I do not know what tells me you are wrong to a despair of ruin."

"He has so little reason to interest himself about us: he had, it is true, formerly known your father, and I had often heard my brother speak of M. d'Orbigny, as of a man with whom he had been on friendly terms before he left Paris with his young wife." "It is just on that account that I have hopes; he has a young wife, she will be compassionate; and, besides, in the country, one can do so much good. He will take you, I suppose, for housekeeper; I will take care of the linen. Since M. d'Orbigny is very rich, in a large house there is always employment."

"Yes; but we have so little right to his interest. We are so unfortunate."

"That is frequently a title in the eyes of charitable people. Let us hope that M. d'Orbigny and his wife are so." "Well, in the case that we need expect nothing from him, I will overcome my false shame, and will write to Madame la Duchesse de Luce nay—this lady, of whom M. de Saint Rémy spoke so often, whose generosity and good heart he so often praised? Yes, the daughter of the Prince du Noirmont. He knew her when she was very small, and he treated her almost as his child, for he was intimately connected with the prince. Madame de Luce nay must have many acquaintances; she could, perhaps, find us a place."

"Doubtless, mamma, but I understand your reserve; you do not know her at all, while my poor father and uncle knew M. d'Orbigny a little."

"Finally, in the case that Madame d'Orbigny can do nothing for us, I will have recourse to a last resource." "What is it, mamma?" "It is a very weak one—a very foolish hope perhaps; but why not try it? the son of M. de Saint Rémy is—"

"M. de Saint Rémy has a son," cried Claire, with astonishment. "Yes, my child, he has a son." "He never spoke of him—he never came to Angers." "True, and for reasons you cannot know. M. de Saint Rémy having left Paris fifteen years ago, has not seen his son since." "Fifteen years without seeing his father! can it be possible? mon Dieu." "Alas! yes, you see it. I tell you that the son of M. de Saint Rémy, being well known in the fashionable world, and very rich—" "Very rich! and his father is poor?" "All the fortune of M. de Saint Rémy, the son, came from his mother." "But no matter; how can he leave his father?" "His father would accept nothing from him." "Why is that?" "This is once more a question to which I cannot reply, my dear child; but I heard my poor brother say that the generosity

of this young man was generally praised. Young and generous, he ought to be good. Thus, learning from me that my husband was the intimate friend of his father, perhaps he might interest himself in procuring us some work or employment; he has so many brilliant and numerous relations, that this would be easy."

"And then we could find out from him, perhaps, if M. de Saint Rémy, his father, should have left Angers before you wrote to him; that would explain his silence." "I believe that M. de Saint Rémy, my child, has no intercourse with his father. In fine, it is only to try." "Unless M. d'Orbigny should answer you in a favourable manner; and I repeat it, I do not know why, but, in spite of myself, I have hope." "But already many days have elapsed, my child, since I have written, and nothing—nothing yet. A letter put in the office before four o'clock in the afternoon, arrives the next morning at Aubiers; five days have now passed since we might have received an answer." "Perhaps he is thinking before he writes, in what way he can be useful to us." "God hear you, my child!" "It appears very plain to me, mamma, if he could do nothing for us, he would have informed you at once."

"Unless he will do nothing at all." "Ah, mamma! can it be possible? not deign to answer us, and leave us to hope four days, eight days perhaps—for when one is unfortunate, they hope always." "Alas! my child, there is sometimes so much indifference for the woes which one does not know!" "But your letter." "My letter cannot give him an idea of our troubles, of our sufferings of each moment; can my letter picture to him our unfortunate life, our humiliations of every description, our existence in this frightful house, the alarm we have experienced even just now? Can my letter describe to him the horrible future which awaits us, if—but stop, my child, do not let us speak of this. Mon Dieu! you tremble—you are cold." "No, mamma; pay no attention to it; but, tell me, suppose everything fails; that the little money which remains in that trunk is spent, can it be possible that in a rich place like Paris, we should both die of hunger and misery, for want of work, and because a bad man has taken what you had?" "Hush, poor child." "But, mamma, could it be?" "Alas!" "But God, who knows all, who can do all, how could he abandon us, he whom we have not offended?" "I entreat you, my child, do not have such gloomy ideas; I would rather see you hope, even against hope." "Come, rouse me up with your dear illusions; I am but too apt to be discouraged, you know well." "Yes, yes! let us hope; it is better. The nephew of the porter will soon return from the post-office with a letter. One more errand to pay from your little treasure, and through my fault. If I had not been so feeble to-day and yesterday, we could have gone ourselves as we did before, but you would not leave me alone here to go yourself." "Could I, my child? Judge then, just now, this wretch who broke in the door, if you had been alone." "Oh! mamma, hush; only to think of it makes me shudder."

At this moment some one knocked sharply at the door. "Heavens, it is he," cried Madame de Fermont, and she pushed with all her strength the table against the door. Her fears, however, ceased when she heard the voice of the Père Micou. "Madame, my nephew, André, has come from the postoffice. It is a letter with an X and a Z for address; it comes from

a distance. There are eight sous postage and the commission—it is twenty sous." "Mamma, a letter from the country: we are saved; it is from M. de Saint Rémy or M. d'Orbigny! Poor mother, you shall suffer no more, no longer be uneasy about me; you shall be happy. God is just—God is good!" cried the young girl, and a ray of hope lighted up her sweet and charming face. "Oh! monsieur, thank you, give—give me quickly," said Madame de Fermont, pushing back the table and half opening the door. "It is twenty sous, madame," said the receiver, showing the letter so impatiently desired. "I am going to pay you, monsieur." "Ah! madame, par exemple—there is no hurry; I am going to the roof; in ten minutes I will descend, and take the money as I pass." The *Père Micou* handed the letter to Madame Fermont, and disappeared.

"The letter is from Normandy. On the stamp is *les Aubiers*; it is from M. d'Orbigny!" cried Madame de Fermont, examining the address. "Well, mamma, was I right?" "Mon Dieu, how my heart beats! Our good or bad fortune is, however, there," said Madame de Fermont, in a faltering voice, showing the letter. Twice her trembling hand approached the seal to break it. She had not the courage. Can one hope to paint the terrible anguish suffered by those who, like Madame de Fermont, await from a letter hope or despair?

The burning and feverish emotion of a player whose last pieces of gold are staked on a single card, and who, breathless, the eye inflamed, awaits the decisive throw which saves or ruins him forever; this emotion, so violent, would hardly give an idea of the terrible anguish of which we speak. In an instant the soul is lifted up with the most radiant hopes, or plunged into the blackest despair. The unfortunate being passes in turn through the most contrary emotions; ineffable feelings of happiness and gratitude towards the generous heart which had pity on his sorrows—a sad and bitter resentment against the selfish or indifferent. "What weakness," said Madame de Fermont, with a sad smile, seating herself on the bed of her daughter; "once more, my poor Claire, our fate is there. I burn to know it, and I dare not. If it is a refusal, alas! it will be always soon enough." "And if it should be a promise of succour? say, mamma! if this poor little letter contains good and consoling words, which will assure us as to the future, in promising us a modest employ in the house of M. d'Orbigny, each minute we lose, is it not a moment of happiness lost?" "Yes, my child; but if, on the contrary—" "No, mamma; you are mistaken, I am sure of it—when I told you that M. d'Orbigny would not have waited so long to answer your letter, except to give you a favourable answer. Let me look at the letter, mamma; I am sure to guess, only from the writing, if the news is good or bad. Hold, I am sure of it now," said Claire, taking the letter; "you have only to look at the bold, good, and strong hand, to see that the writer must be accustomed to give to those who suffer." "I entreat you, Claire; no more of these foolish hopes, or I can never open the letter." "Mon Dieu! good little mamma, without opening it I can tell you what it contains; listen: Madame, your condition, and that of your daughter, is so worthy of interest, that I beg you will have the goodness to come immediately to me in case you would like to take charge of my house."

"My child, once more I entreat you—no insane hopes; the reverse will be frightful. Come, courage," said Madame de Fermont, taking the letter from her daughter, and preparing to break the seal. "Courage for you—very well!" said Claire, smiling, and carried away by a feeling of confidence so natural at her age. "As for me, I have no need of it; I am so sure of what I advance. Stop, do you wish me to open the letter? shall I read it? I give it me, timid mamma."

"Yes—I would rather—here. But no, no; it is better that I should." And Madame de Fermont broke the seal with indescribable emotion. Her daughter, also, in spite of her apparent confidence, could hardly breathe.

"Read it aloud, mamma," said she.

"The letter is not long; it is from the Comtesse d'Orbigny," said Madame de Fermont, looking at the signature.

"So much the better; it is good. Do you see, mamma, this excellent young lady has been pleased to answer you herself."

"We shall see."

"MADAME :

"M. le Comte d'Orbigny, very much indisposed for some time past, could not reply to you during my absence."—"Do you see, mamma, it was not his fault." "Listen, listen."—"Having arrived this morning from Paris, I hasten to write you, madame, after having conferred on the subject of your letter with M. d'Orbigny. He has but a faint recollection of the relations which you suppose to have existed between him and your brother. As to the name of your husband, madame, it is not unknown to M. d'Orbigny; but he cannot recollect under what circumstances he heard it mentioned. The pretended spoliation, of which so lightly you accuse M. Jacques Ferrand, whom we have the good fortune to have for a notary, is, in the eyes of M. d'Orbigny, a cruel calumny, of which, doubtless, you have not counted the bearing. My husband, as well as myself, madame, know and admire the well-known probity of the respectable and pious man you attack so blindly. It is to inform you, madame, that M. d'Orbigny, feeling, doubtless, for the unfortunate position in which you are placed, and of which it is not his province to find out the real cause, finds it out of his power to assist you.

"Be pleased to receive, madame, with this expression of the regrets of M. d'Orbigny, the assurance of my most distinguished sentiments."

"COMTESSE D'ORBIGNY."

The mother and daughter looked at each other, incapable of uttering a word.

The *Père Micou* knocked at the door and said, "Madame, can I come in for the postage and commission? It is twenty sous." "Ah! it is right! such good news! it is well worth what we spend in two days for our living," said Madame de Fermont, with a bitter smile; and leaving the letter on the bed, she went towards an old trunk without a lock, stooped down, and opened it. "We are robbed!" cried the unhappy woman, with horror. "Nothing—no more!" added she, in a mournful tone. And, powerless, she leaned on the trunk.

"What do you say, mamma? The bag of money?"

But Madame de Fermont arose quickly, went out of the chamber, and, addressing the receiver, she said, with a sparkling eye, and cheeks coloured with indignation and alarm, "Monsieur, I had a bag of money in this trunk; some one

has robbed me—yesterday, doubtless, for I went out for an hour with my daughter. This money must be found. Do you hear? You are responsible." "Some one robbed you! It is not true; my house is honest," said the receiver, harshly and insolently. "You say that, so as not to pay me the twenty sous." "I tell you, monsieur, that this money, all that I possessed in the world, some one has stolen; it must be found, or I'll make a complaint. Oh! I shall spare nothing, respect nothing—do you see—I notify you!" "That would be very fine, you who have no papers; go and make your complaint! go at once! I defy you!" The unhappy woman was overcome. She could not go out and leave her daughter alone in bed, since the fright she had received in the morning, and, above all, after the threats addressed to her by the receiver. He continued: "It is a cheat; you had no more a bag of silver than a bag of gold; you don't want to pay me the postage, hey? Good! all the same; when you pass before my door, I will tear off your old black shawl from your shoulders; it is very threadbare, but it is worth at least twenty sous." "Ah! monsieur," cried Madame de Fermont, bursting into tears, "have pity on us. This small sum is all we had—my daughter and I; that stolen, we have nothing left—nothing, do you understand?—nothing—but to starve!" "What would you have me to do? If it is true that you are robbed, and silver, too, it has been spent long since; the money—"

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" "The 'gaillard' who has stolen them would not have been simple enough to mark the money and keep it here, so that he might be caught—if it is some one in this house, which I do believe—for, as I said only this morning to the uncle of the lady on the first floor, here is a real place for plunder; if you are robbed, it is your misfortune. For should you make a hundred thousand complaints, you would not recover a sous—you would gain nothing by it, I tell you—believe me." "Well," cried the receiver, arousing himself, and seeing Madame de Fermont stagger, "what's the matter? You turn pale? Take care of her, Mademoiselle—your mother is sick," added he, advancing in time to save her from falling. The factitious energy which had so long sustained her gave way under this new affliction. "Mother—mon Dieu!—what is the matter?" cried Claire, still in bed. The receiver, yet active and strong for his age, seized with a transitory feeling of pity, took Madame de Fermont in his arms, pushed open the door, and entered, saying, "Mademoiselle, pardon me for coming in while you are in bed, but I must bring in your mother; she has fainted; it can't last." On seeing this man enter, Claire uttered a cry of alarm, and concealed herself, as well as she could, under the bedclothes. The receiver seated Madame de Fermont on the chair near the bed, and retired, leaving the door half open, the "gros boîtes" having broken the lock.

One hour after this, the violent malady, which for so long a time had threatened Madame de Fermont, showed itself. Attacked by a violent fever and frightful delirium, the unfortunate woman was laid in the bed of her child, who, alone, alarmed, and almost as ill as her mother, had neither money nor resources, and feared at each moment to see the bandit enter who lived upon the same floor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RUE DE CHAILLOT.

We will precede, by some hours, M. Badinet, who, from the "passage de la Brasseire," had gone in haste to the Vicomte de Saint Rémy. This last-mentioned person, as we have before said, lived in the Rue de Chaillot, and occupied a charming little house, built between a court and garden, in this solitary "quartier," although very near the Champs Elysées, the most fashionable "promenade" in Paris. It is useless to enumerate the advantages which M. de Saint Rémy derived from a position so wisely chosen. We will only say, a person could enter his house very secretly, through a little garden door, which opened on a small and very lonesome street.

In fine, by a miraculous chance, one of the finest horticultural establishments in Paris had also, in this out-of-the-way passage, an exit not much used. The mysterious visitors of M. de Saint Rémy, in case of a surprise or unlooked-for encounter, were armed with a pretext perfectly plausible and rural for having adventured in the "ruelle fatale." They went (they might say) to choose rare flowers at a celebrated florist's, renowned for the beauty of his conservatories. These visitors, besides, would only have told half a falsehood; the vicomte, with distinguished taste, had a charming green-house, which extended, in part, along the little street we have spoken of; the little door opened into this delicious winter garden, which reached to a boudoir situated on the ground floor of the house.

Madame de Lucenay had demanded a key of this little door. The interior of the mansion of M. de Saint Rémy presented a singular appearance; it was divided into two establishments—the ground floor, where he received "les dames," the first story, where he received "les hommes," to dinner and play; in fine, those he called his friends.

Thus, on the ground floor was a "chamber à coucher," which shone with gold, mirrors, flowers, silks, and lace; a small music-room, where were a harp and pianos (M. de Saint Rémy was an excellent musician), a cabinet of pictures and curiosities, the boudoir communicating with the green-house, a dining-room, a bathing-room, and a small library. It is useless to say that all these rooms, furnished with exquisite taste, had for ornaments some "Watteaus" but little known, some Bouchers unheard of, groups of statuary in "biscuit," and on their stands of jasper, or "brèche antique," a few valuable copies, in white marble, of some of the finest groups of the "Musée." Joined to this, in summer, for perspective, the deep shade of a verdant garden; quiet, loaded with flowers, peopled with birds, watered by a little brook of living water, which, before it spreads itself over the short grass, falls from a black and rustic rock, shining like a ribbon of silver gauze, and is lost in a pearly wave, in a limpid basin, where two fine swans show their graceful forms.

And when night came, calm and serene, how much shade, how much perfume, what stillness in sweet-scented groves, whose thick foliage served as a canopy to the rustic sofas made of reeds and Indian mats!

In winter, on the contrary, except the glass which opened into the conservatory, all was closed: the transparent silk of the blinds, the

* A painter.

heavy mass of lace and muslin curtains, rendered the light still more mysterious; on every disposable place large masses of exotics seemed to spring out of vases glittering with gold and enamel.

Such was the vicomte. At Athens he had been, doubtless, admired, exalted, deified, as the equal of Alcibiades; at the time of which we speak, the vicomte was nothing more than an unworthy forger, a miserable cheat.

The first story had an entirely different appearance, altogether masculine. There nothing coquettish, nothing feminine; the furniture was of a style simple and serene; for ornaments, fire-arms, pictures of race-horses, which had earned for the vicomte a good number of gold and silver vases, placed on the tables; the "tabagie" (smoking-room) and the saloon for play joined a lively-looking dining-room, where eight persons (the number always strictly limited when it was a question of a *dîner savant*) had often appreciated the excellence of the cook, and the not less excellent merit of the vicomte's cellar, before commencing with him some nervous parties of whist of five or six hundred Louis, or to rattle the noisy dice-box.

The apartments of M. de Saint Rémy being thus thrown open to the reader, he will now please to follow us to more familiar regions, to enter the carriage court, and mount the little staircase which leads to the very comfortable room of Edwards Patterson, chief of the stables to M. de Saint Rémy.

This illustrious coachman had invited to breakfast M. Boyer, confidential valet de chambre of the vicomte. A very pretty English servant girl having retired after having brought in a silver teapot, our two gentlemen were left alone. Edwards was about forty years of age; never did a more skilful or fatter coachman cause his seat to groan under a rotundity more imposing, nor to ornament with a powdered wig a face more rubicund, nor to collect more elegantly, in his left hand, the quadruple ribands of a four-in-hand; as good a judge of horses as Tattersall of London, having been, in his youth, as good a trainer as the old and celebrated Chifney, the vicomte had found in Edwards a rare thing, an excellent coachman and a man very capable of directing the training of some race-horses, which he had had for "tenir des Paris." Edwards, when he did not display his sumptuous brown and silver livery on the emblazoned hammer-cloth of his seat, looked very much like an honest English farmer; it is under this guise we now shall present him to our readers, adding, that in his broad and red face one could easily perceive the diabolical and unmerciful cunning of a horse-jockey.

M. Boyer, his guest, the confidential valet, was a tall, slender man, with gray hair, rather bald, and with a sly, cool, discreet, and reserved expression; he used very choice language, had polite, easy manners, rather literary, political opinions of the conservative stamp, and could creditably play his part of first violin in a quartette of amateurs; at short intervals he took, with the best grace in the world, a pinch of snuff from a golden box mounted with fine pearls, after which he brushed negligently, with the back of his hand, the folds of his fine linen shirt, quite as fine as that of his master. "Do you know, my dear Edwards," said Boyer, "that your servant Betty makes quite a supportable cook, 'bourgeoise'!" "Ma foi, it is a good girl," said Ed-

wards, who spoke French perfectly, "and I shall take her with me to my establishment, if I should decide on it; and on this subject, since we are here alone, my dear Boyer, let us talk business; you understand it very well."

"Why yes, a little," said Boyer, modestly, and taking a pinch of snuff. "That is learned so naturally, when one occupies himself with the affairs of others." "I have, then, very important advice to ask of you; it is on this account that I begged the favour of your company to a cup of tea this morning."

"Quite at your service, my dear Edwards."

"You know that besides the race horses, I had a contract with M. le Vicomte for the complete maintenance of his stables, cattle, and people; that is to say, eight horses and five or six grooms and jockeys, for the sum of twenty-four thousand francs a year, my wages included." "It was reasonable."

"During four years, M. le Vicomte punctually paid me; but about the middle of last year he said to me, 'Edwards, I owe you about twenty-four thousand francs; how much do you estimate, at the lowest price, my horses and vehicles?' 'Monsieur le Vicomte, the eight horses would not sell for less than three thousand francs each, one with the other, and then they would be given away (and it is true, Boyer, for the phaeton pair cost five hundred guineas), that would make twenty-four thousand francs for the horses. As to the carriages, there are four, say twelve thousand francs, which, in all, would make thirty-six thousand francs.'

"Well?" answered the vicomte, "buy them all from me at this price, on condition that, for the twelve thousand francs remaining after your claim is paid, you will keep and leave at my disposition, horses, servants, and carriages for six months."

"And you wisely agreed to the bargain, Edwards? It was a golden affair." "Certainly it was; in two weeks the six months will have expired, and I enter into possession."

"Nothing can be plainer. The papers were drawn up by M. Badier, the vicomte's agent. In what have you need of my advice?" "What ought I to do? Sell the establishment on account of the departure of M. le Vicomte (and it will sell well), or shall I establish myself as a horse-dealer, with my stable, which will make a fine beginning? What do you advise?"

"I advise you to do what I shall do myself."

"How?" "I am in the same position that you are." "How?" "M. le Vicomte detests details. When I came here I had, through economy and by inheritance, some sixty thousand francs. I paid the expenses of the house, as you did the stables. About the same time that you did, I found myself in advance some twenty thousand francs; and for those who furnished the supplies, some sixty thousand. Then the vicomte proposed to me, as he did to you, to reimburse myself by buying of him the furniture of the house, comprising the silver—which is fine—the pictures, and so on; the whole estimated at the very lowest price, 140,000 francs. There were 80,000 francs to pay; with the remainder I engaged, as long as it lasted, to defray the expenses of the table, servants, and so forth, and for nothing else: it was a condition of the bargain."

"Because that on these expenses you would gain something more."

"Necessarily; for I have made arrangements

with those who furnish the supplies that I will not pay until after the sale," said Boyer, taking a huge pinch of snuff; "so that at the end of this month—"

"The furniture is yours, as the horses and carriages are mine."

"Evidently. M. le Vicomte has gained by this, to live as he always liked to live, to the last moment—as a grand signior—and that in the very teeth of his creditors; for furniture, silver, horses, vehicles, all had been paid for at his coming of age, and had become my property and yours."

"Then, M. le Vicomte is ruined?" "In five years."

"And how much did he inherit?" "Only a poor little million, cash down," said M. Boyer, quite disdainfully, taking another pinch of snuff. "Add to this million about two hundred thousand francs of debts, it is passable. It is, then, to tell you, my dear Edwards, that I have had an idea of letting this house, admirably furnished as it is, to some English people. Some of your compatriots would have paid well for it."

"Without doubt. Why do you not do it?"

"Yes, but the 'non valeurs! c'est chanceux;' so I have decided to sell. M. le Vicomte is so well known as a connoisseur, that everything would bring a double price, so that I should realize a round sum. Do as I shall, Edwards: realize, realize, and do not adventure your earnings in speculations. You! chief coachman of M. le Vicomte de Saint Rémy! It will be, who can get you. Only yesterday some one spoke to me of a minor just emancipated, a cousin of Madame le Duchesse de Lucenay, the young Duc de Montbrison, who has arrived from Italy with his tutor, and who is about establishing himself. Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income, in good land; and, with that, just entering into life—twenty years old. All the illusions of confidence—all the infatuation of expense—prodigal as a prince. I know the intendant. I can tell you this in confidence: he has already nearly agreed with me as first valet de chambre. He countenances me, the niais!" And M. Boyer shrugged his shoulders again, having recourse to his snuff-box.

"You hope to turn him out?" "Parbleu! he is an imbecile or an impertinent. He puts me there as if he had no fear of me! Before two months are over I shall be in his place."

"Two hundred and fifty thousand livres income!" said Edwards, reflecting, "and a young man. It is a good house."

"I will tell you what there is to do. I will speak for you to my protector," said M. Boyer, ironically. "Enter there—it is a fortune which has roots, and to which one can hang on for a long time. It is not this miserable million of M. le Vicomte—a real snowball—one ray of Parisian sun, and all is said. I have seen here that I should only be a bird of passage: it is a pity, for this house does us honour; and, up to the last moment, I will serve M. le Vicomte with the respect and esteem which are his due."

"Ma foi, my dear Boyer, I thank you, and accept your proposition; but suppose I was to propose to this young duke the stable of M. le Vicomte? It is all ready; it is known and admired by all Paris."

"Exactly so; you might make an affair of gold."

"But why do you not propose this house to him, so admirably mounted? What can he find better?"

"Pardieu! Edwards, you are a man of mind, it does not surprise me, but you gave me an excellent idea. We must address ourselves to the vicomte; he is so good a master that he would not refuse to speak for us to the young duke. He can tell him that, leaving for the Legation of Gerolstein, where he is an attaché, he wishes to dispose of his whole establishment. Let us see: 160,000 francs for the house, all furnished, the silver and the pictures; 50,000 francs for the stable and carriages; that makes 230,000 to 240,000 francs. It is an excellent affair for a young man who wants everything. He would spend three times this amount before he could get anything half so elegant and select together as the 'ensemble' of this establishment; for it must be acknowledged, Edwards, there is no one can equal M. le Vicomte in knowing how to live."

"And horses!" "And good cheer! Godefroi, his cook, leaves here a hundred times better than when he came. M. le Vicomte has given him excellent counsels—has enormously refined him."

"Besides, they say M. le Vicomte is such a good player."

"Admirable! Gaining such large sums with even more indifference than he loses; and yet I have never seen any lose more gallantly."

"Ah! ça—what is he going to do now?"

"Set out for Germany, with a good travelling-carriage and seven or eight thousand francs, which he knows how to get. Oh! I feel no embarrassment about the vicomte: he is one of those personages who always fall on their feet, as they say."

"And he has no more money to inherit?"

"None; for his father has only a small competency."

"His father?" "Certainly." "The father of M. le Vicomte is not dead?" "He was not about five or six months since. M. le Vicomte wrote to him for some family papers." "But he never comes here?"

"For a good reason. For fifteen years he has lived in the country, at Angers." "But M. le Vicomte never goes to see him?" "His father?" "Yes."

"Never, never—ah, yes!" "Have they quarrelled?"

"What I am going to tell you is no secret, for I had it from the confidential agent of M. le Prince de Noirmont."

"The father of Madame de Lucenay?" said Edwards, with a cunning and significant look, of which M. Boyer, faithful to his habits of reserve and discretion, took no notice, but resumed, coldly,

"Madame la Duchesse de Lucenay is, in effect, the daughter of M. le Prince de Noirmont; the father of M. le Vicomte was intimately connected with the prince. Madame la Duchesse was then a very young person, and M. de Saint Rémy the elder treated her as familiarly as if she had been his own child. Notwithstanding his sixty years, he is a man of an iron character, courageous as a lion, and of a probity that I shall permit myself to designate as marvelous. He possessed almost nothing, and had married, from love, the mother of M. le Vicomte, a young person, rather rich, who brought the million at the christening of which we have just had the honour to assist," and M. Boyer made a low bow.

Edwards did the same.

"The marriage was very happy until the moment when the father of M. le Vicomte found, as was said, by chance, some devilish letters, which proved evidently that, during an absence, some three or four years after his marriage, his wife had had a tender weakness for a certain Polish count."

"That often happens to the Poles. When I lived with M. le Marquis de Senneval, Madame la Marquise—une enragée—"

M. Boyer interrupted his companion. "You should know, my dear Edwards, the alliances of our great families before you speak, otherwise you reserve for yourself cruel mistakes."

"How?" "Madame la Marquise de Senneval is the sister of the Duc de Montbrison, where you desire to engage."

"Oh!—the devil!" "Judge of the effect, if you had spoken of her in this manner before the envious or detractors: you would not have remained twenty-four hours in the house."

"It is true, Boyer. I will try to know the alliances."

"I resume. The father of M. le Vicomte discovered, then, after twelve or fifteen years of a marriage, until then happy, that he had reason to complain of a Polish count. Fortunately or unfortunately, the vicomte was born nine months after that his father, or, rather, that M. le Comte de Saint Rémy had returned from this fatal journey, so that he could not be certain whether it was his child or not. Nevertheless, M. le Comte separated at once from his wife, not wishing to touch a sou of the fortune she had brought him, and retired to the country, with about eighty thousand francs which he possessed; but you shall see the rancour of this diabolical character. Although the outrage was dated back fifteen years when he discovered it, yet he set off, accompanied by M. de Fermont, one of his relations, in pursuit of the Pole, and found him at Venice, after having sought for him in almost all the cities of Europe." "What an obstinate!"

"A devilish rancour, I tell you, my dear Edwards! At Venice a terrible duel was fought, in which the Pole was killed. All was done fairly; but the father of M. le Vicomte showed, they say, such ferocious joy at seeing the Pole mortally wounded, that his relation, M. de Fermont, was obliged to drag him away; the count wishing to see, as he said, his enemy expire under his eyes."

"What a man! what a man!" "The Comte returned to Paris, went to the house of his wife, announced to her that he had just returned from killing the Pole, and left her. Since then, he has never seen her nor her son, but has lived at Angers, like a real 'loup-garou' as they say, with what remains of his 90,000 francs, well curtailed, as you may suppose, by his race after this Pole. At Angers he sees no one, except the wife and daughter of his relation, M. de Fermont, who has been dead for some years. And, besides, it would seem as if this was an unfortunate family, for the brother of Madame de Fermont blew his brains out a few weeks since, it is said."

"And the mother of the vicomte?" "He lost her a long time since. It is on that account that M. le Vicomte, at his coming of age, has enjoyed the fortune of his mother. So you plainly see, my dear Edwards, that as regards inheritance, M. le Vicomte has nothing, or almost nothing, to expect from his father." "Who, besides,

must detest him?" "He would never see him after the fatal discovery, persuaded that he is the son of the Pole."

The conversation of the two personages was interrupted by a footman of gigantic size, carefully powdered, although it was hardly eleven o'clock. "Monsieur Boyer, M. le Vicomte has rung twice," said the giant. Boyer appeared distressed at this neglect; he arose precipitately, and followed the servant with as much eagerness and respect as if he had not been the proprietor of the mansion of his master.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNT DE SAINT RÉMY.

"A month—it is very long."
(GOETHE, *the Grand Capitan*, Act I., Scene 2.)

Two hours had passed since Boyer had gone to attend the vicomte, when the father of the last-mentioned knocked at the "porte cochère" of the house in the Rue de Chaillou.

The Comte de Saint Rémy was a man of tall stature, still active and vigorous, notwithstanding his age; the almost copper colour of his skin contrasted strangely with the silvery whiteness of his beard and hair; his heavy and still black eyebrows overshadowed his piercing but sunken eyes. Although, from a kind of misanthropy, he wore clothes quite rusty, and there was in his whole appearance that which commanded respect. The door of his son's house flew open, and he entered. A porter, in a grand livery of brown and silver, profusely powdered, and wearing silk stockings, appeared on the threshold of an elegant lodge, which had as much resemblance to the smoky den of the Pipelets as a cobbler's stall could have to the sumptuous shop of a fashionable "lingère." "M. de Saint Rémy?" demanded the comte, in a short tone.

The porter, instead of replying, examined with much contempt the white beard, the threadbare coat, and the old hat of the unknown, who held in his hand a large cane. "M. de Saint Rémy?" repeated the comte, impatiently, shocked at the impertinent examination of the porter.

"M. le Vicomte is not at home." So saying, the "confrère" of M. Pipelet drew the "cord," and, with a significant gesture, invited the unknown to retire. "I will wait," said the comte, and he passed on. "Oh! friend! friend! one does not enter that way into houses!" cried the porter, running after the comte, and taking him by the arm.

"How, scoundrel!" answered the old man, raising his cane; "you dare to touch me!" "I will dare something else, if you do not walk out at once. I have told you that M. le Comte was out, so walk off." At this moment Boyer, attracted by the sound of voices, made his appearance. "What is the matter?" demanded he.

"Monsieur Boyer, it is this man who will absolutely enter, although I have told him that the M. le Vicomte is out."

"Let us put a stop to this," replied the comte, addressing Boyer; "I wish to see my son—if he has gone out, I will wait."

We have said that Boyer was ignorant neither of the existence nor of the misanthropy of the father, and sufficiently a physiognomist, he did not for a moment doubt the identity of the comte, but bowed low to him, and answered, "If Monsieur le Comte will be so good as to follow me, I am at his orders."

"Go on," said M. de Saint Rémy, who accompanied Boyer, to the profound dismay of the porter.

Preceded by the valet de chambre, the comte arrived on the first story, and still following his guide, was ushered into a little saloon, situated immediately over the boudoir of the "rez-de-chaussée" (ground floor).

"M. le Vicomte has been obliged to go out this morning," said Boyer, "and if Monsieur le Comte will have the kindness to wait, it will not be long before he returns." And the valet de chambre disappeared.

Remaining alone, the comte looked around him with indifference, until suddenly he discovered the picture of his wife, the mother of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He crossed his arms on his heart, held down his head, as if to avoid the sight of this victim, and walked about with rapid steps.

"And yet I am not certain—he may be my son—sometimes this doubt is frightful to me."

"If he is my son, then my abandoning him, my refusal ever to see him, are unpardonable

and then to think my name—my name, of which I have ever been so proud, belongs to the son of a man whose heart I could have torn out! oh! I do not know why I am not bereft of my senses when I think of it!" And M. de Saint Rémy, continuing to walk with agitation, raised mechanically the curtain which separated the saloon from the "cabinet de travail" of Florestan, and entered the apartment.

He had hardly disappeared for a moment, when a small door, concealed by the tapestry, opened softly, and Madame de Lucenay, wrapped in a large shawl of green cashmere, and wearing a very plain black velvet bonnet, entered the saloon which the comte had just left. The duchess, as we have said before, had a key to the little private garden door; not finding Florestan in the apartments of the "rez-de-chaussée," she had supposed that, perhaps, he was in his "cabinet de travail," and without any fear had come up by a small staircase which led from the boudoir to the first story. Unfortunately, a very threatening visit from M. Badiot had obliged him to go out precipitately.

Madame de Lucenay, seeing no one, was about to enter the cabinet, when the curtains were thrown back, and she found herself face to face with the father of Florestan.

She could not restrain a cry of alarm.

"Clothilde!" cried the comte, stupefied.

The duchesse remained immovable, contemplating with surprise this old man with a white beard and badly clothed, whose features did not appear altogether strange.

"You, Clothilde!" repeated the comte, in a tone of sorrowful reproach, "you here—at the house of my son?" These last words decided Madame de Lucenay; she at length recognised the father of Florestan, and cried,

"M. de Saint Rémy!" Her position was so plain and significant, that the duchesse disclaimed to have recourse to a falsehood to explain the motive of her presence in this house; counting on the paternal affection which the comte had formerly shown her, she extended her hand, and said with an air—at once gracious, cordial, and fearless—which belonged only to her, "Come, do not scold! you are my oldest friend! Do you remember, more than twenty years ago, you called me your dear Clothilde?"

"Yes, I called you thus, but—" "I know in

advance all that you will say to me; you know my motto: *What is, is; what shall be, shall be.*"

"Ah! Clothilde!" "Spare me your reproaches; let me rather speak to you of my joy at seeing you! your presence recalls so many things; my poor father, in the first place; and then my fifteenth year. Ah! fifteenth—sweet fifteenth!"

"It is because your father was my friend, that—"

"Oh, yes!" answered the duchesse, interrupting them, "he loved you so much! Do you remember he called you, laughingly, '*l'homme aux rubans verts*'? You always said to him, 'You will spoil Clothilde, take care!' and he would answer, embracing me, 'I believe I spoil her; and I must hurry and spoil her more, for soon '*le monde*' will carry her off, and spoil her in its turn.' Excellent father! what a friend I lost!" A tear glistened in the fine eyes of Madame Lucenay, and giving her hand to M. de Saint Rémy, she said to him, in an agitated voice, "True, I am happy, very happy to see you again; you awaken souvenirs so precious, so dear to my heart!"

"If you have been in Paris for any time," continued Madame de Lucenay, "it was very unkind in you not to come to see me; we should have talked so much of the past; for you know I begin to arrive at the age when there is a great charm in talking to old friends."

Perhaps the duchesse could not have spoken with more "nonchalance" if she had been receiving a visit at the Hôtel de Lucenay. M. de Saint Rémy could not refrain from saying earnestly, "Instead of talking of the past, let us talk of the present. My son may come in from one moment to another, and—" "No!" said Clothilde, interrupting him, "I have the key of the private door, and his arrival is always announced by a bell when he comes in by the 'porte-cochère;' at this noise I shall disappear as mysteriously as I came; and I will leave you alone. What a sweet surprise you are going to cause him! you, who have for so long a time abandoned him!" "Hold! it is I who have reproaches to make you." "To me? to me?"

"Certainly! What guide, what assistance had I on entering into society? and, for a thousand things, the counsels of a father are indispensable. Thus, frankly, it has been very wrong in you to—" Here Madame de Lucenay, giving way to the peculiarity of her character, could not prevent herself from laughing heartily, and saying to the comte,

"You must avow that the position is at least singular, and that it is very 'piquant' that I should preach to you!"

"It is rather strange; but I deserve neither your sermons nor your praises. I come to my son; but it is not on account of my son. At his age he can no longer need my counsels. 'What do you mean?' 'You must know for what reasons I detest society and hold Paris in horror!' said the comte. Nothing but circumstances of the last importance could have induced me to leave Angers, and, above all, to come here—in this house! But I have conquered my repugnance, and have recourse to every one who can aid me in researches of great interest to me." "Oh! then," said Madame de Lucenay, with most affectionate eagerness, "I beg you dispose of me, if I can be of any use to you. Is there need of any applications? M. de Lucenay ought to have a certain influence; for, on the

says when I go to dine with my great aunt De Montbrison, he gives a dinner at home to some deputies; this is not done without some motive; this inconvenience must be paid for by some probable advantage. Once more, if we can serve you, command us. There is my young cousin, the little Duc de Montbrison, who is connected with all the nobility, perhaps he could do something? In this case, I offer him to you. In a word, dispose of me and mine; you know if I can call myself a devoted friend!" "I know it; and I do not refuse your assistance; although, however—"

"Come, my dear *Alceste*, we are people of the world, let us act like such; whether we are here or elsewhere, it is of no import, I suppose, to the affair which interests you, and which now interests me extremely, since it is yours. Let us speak of this, and sincerely; I require it."

Thus saying, the duchesse approached the fireplace, and, leaning against it, she put out the prettiest little foot in the world to warm.

With perfect tact, Madame de Lucenay seized the occasion to speak no more of the vicomte, and to converse with M. de Saint Rémy on a subject to which he attached much importance.

"You are ignorant, perhaps, Clothilde," said the comte, "that for a long time past I have lived at Angers?"

"No—I knew it." "Notwithstanding the isolated state I sought, I had chosen this city, because one of my relations dwelt there, M. de Fermont, who, during my troubles, acted as a brother towards me, having acted as a second in a duel."

"Yes, a terrible duel; my father told me of it," said Madame de Lucenay, sadly; "but, happily, Florestan is ignorant of this duel, and also of the cause that led to it."

"I was willing to let him respect his mother," answered the comte, and, suppressing a sigh, he continued, and related to Madame de Lucenay the history of Madame de Fermont up to the time of her leaving Angers for Paris, after the reception of the news of her brother's suicide; to which he added, "At the end of some time, I learned that the furniture of the house which she occupied at Angers was sold by her orders, and that this sum had been employed to pay some debts left my Madame de Fermont. Uneasy at this circumstance, I inquired, and learned vaguely that this unfortunate woman and her daughter were in distress—the victims, doubtless, of a bankruptcy. If Madame de Fermont could, in such an extremity, count on any one, it was on me. Yet I received no news from her. You cannot imagine my sufferings—my inquietude. It was absolutely necessary that I should find them, to know why they did not apply to me, poor as I was. I set out for Paris, leaving a person at Angers, who, if by chance any information was obtained, was to advise me." "Well?" "Yesterday I had a letter from Angers; nothing was known. On arriving here I commenced my researches. I went at first to the former residence of the brother of Madame de Fermont. Here they told me she lived at the 'quai' of the 'Canal Saint Martin.'"

"And this—" "Had been her lodgings; but she had left, and they were ignorant of her new abode. Since then all my inquiries have been useless; and I have come here, in hopes that she may have applied to the son of her old friend. I am afraid that even this will be in vain."

For some minutes Madame de Lucenay had listened to the comte with redoubled attention; suddenly she said, "Truly, this would be singular, that these should be the same with those Madame d'Harville is so much interested for." "Who?" asked the comte. "The widow of whom you speak is still young? and of a noble figure?" "She is so! but how do you know?" "Her daughter handsome as an angel, and about sixteen?" "Yes! yes!" "And is named Claire?"

"Oh! in mercy, speak! where are they?" "Alas! I know not." "You do not know?"

"This is what has happened: a lady of my acquaintance, Madame d'Harville, came to me to ask if I knew a widow who had a daughter named Claire, and whose brother had committed suicide. Madame d'Harville came to me because she had seen these words, '*Write to Madame de Lucenay*,' traced on the fragment of a letter which this unhappy woman had written to a person unknown, whose aid she entreated." "She intended to write to you! and why?" "I am ignorant; I do not know her."

"But she knew you!" cried M. de Saint Rémy, struck with a sudden idea. "What do you say?" "A hundred times she has heard me speak of your father, of you, of your generous and excellent heart. In her trouble, she must have thought of you." "This can be thus explained." "And Madame d'Harville, how did she get possession of this letter?"

"I am ignorant; all I know is, that, without knowing where this poor mother and child had taken refuge, she was, I believe, on their track."

"Then I count upon you, Clothilde, to introduce me to Madame d'Harville; I must see her to-day." "Impossible! her husband has just fallen a victim to a frightful accident; a gun, which he did not know was loaded, went off while in his hands, and killed him on the spot."

"Ah! this is horrible!" "The marquise departed immediately, to pass her first mourning at her father's in Normandy." "Clothilde, I conjure you to write to her to-day; ask for whatever information she may possess; since she interests herself for these poor women, tell her she cannot have a warmer auxiliary than me; my sole desire is to find the widow of my friend, and to partake with her and her daughter the little I possess. It is now my sole family." "Always the same—always generous and devoted! Count on me, I will write to-day to Madame d'Harville. Where shall I send her answer?" "To Asnières, 'poste restante.'"

"What eccentricity! why do you lodge there and not at Paris?" "I hate Paris, on account of the 'souvenirs' it awakens," answered M. de Saint Rémy, with a gloomy air; "my old physician, Doctor Griffin, has a small country-house on the banks of the Seine, near Asnières; he does not live there in winter, and offered it to me; it is almost a faubourg of Paris; I could, after my researches, find there the solitude which pleases me; I have accepted." "I will write you, then, at Asnières; I can, besides, give you now some information which may perhaps serve you, which I received from Madame d'Harville. The ruin of Madame Fermont has been caused by the roguery of the notary who had the charge of all her fortune. He denies the deposit."

"The scoundrel! and what is his name?" "M. Jacques Ferrand," said the duchesse, without being able to conceal her desire to laugh.

"What a strange being you are, Clothilde! There is nothing in all this but what is serious and sad, yet you laugh!" said the comte, surprised and vexed.

"Pardon me, my friend," answered the duchesse: "it is that the notary is such a singular man, and they tell such strange things of him. But, seriously, if his reputation as an honest man is no more merited than his reputation as a pious man (and I declare this usurped), he is a wretch! And he lives—"

"Rue du Sentier." "He shall have a visit from me. What you have told me coincides with certain suspicions." "What suspicions?" "From what I can learn respecting the death of the brother of my poor friend, I am almost led to believe that this unfortunate man, instead of committing suicide, has been the victim of an assassination."

"Grand Dieu! and what makes you suppose this?" "Several reasons, which will be too long to tell you; I shall leave you now." "How! you leave, without seeing Florestan?" "This interview would be too painful for me—you must comprehend it. I only braved it in the hopes of obtaining some information about Madame de Fermont, wishing to neglect no means to find her. Now adieu."

"Ah! you are without pity!" "Do you not know?" "I know that your son has never had more need of your counsels."

"How? Is he not rich, happy?"

"Yes, but he does not know mankind. Blindly prodigal, because he is confiding and generous; in everything, everywhere, and always 'grand seigneur.' I fear he is abused. If you knew what a noble heart he has! I have never dared to lecture him on the subject of his expensés and extravagance: in the first place, because I am at least as foolish as he is; and then—for other reasons; but you, on the contrary, you could—" Madame de Lucenay did not finish; suddenly she heard the voice of Florestan de Saint Rémy. He entered precipitately into the cabinet adjoining the saloon; after having quickly shut the door, he said, in an agitated voice, to some one who accompanied him, "But it is impossible!" "But I repeat to you," answered the clear and piercing voice of M. Badinot, "I repeat to you, that, without this, in four hours you will be arrested. For if he has not this money, our man will go and make a complaint to the '*procureur du roi*,' and you know the penalty of a forgery like this; the galleys, my poor vicomte!" It is impossible to describe the look which Madame de Lucenay and the father of Florestan exchanged on hearing these terrible words.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONVERSATION.

On hearing these fearful words addressed to his son by M. Badinot, the comte changed colour, and clung to a chair for support. His venerable and respected name dishonoured by a man whom he had reason to doubt was his son! His first feeling overcome, the angry looks of the old man, and a threatening gesture which he made as he advanced towards the cabinet, revealed a resolution so alarming, that Madame de Lucenay caught him by the hand, stopped him, and said, in a low tone, with the

most profound conviction, "He is innocent; I swear to you! Listen in silence."

The comte stood still; he wished to believe what the duchesse had said was true.

She, on her part, was persuaded of his honesty. To obtain new sacrifices from this woman, so blindly generous—sacrifices which alone had saved him from the threats of Jacques Ferrand—the vicomte had sworn to Madame de Lucenay, that, dupe of a scoundrel from whom he had received in payment the forged draught, he ran the risk of being regarded as an accomplice of the forger, having himself put it in circulation.

Madame de Lucenay knew that the vicomte was imprudent, prodigal, and careless; but never for a moment had she supposed him capable of an infamous action, not even the slightest indiscretion.

By twice lending him considerable sums under very peculiar circumstances, she had wished to render him a friendly service, the vicomte only accepting this money on the express condition of returning it; for there was due to him, he said, more than twice this amount.

His apparent luxurious manner of living allowed her to believe it. Besides, Madame de Lucenay, yielding to her natural kind impulses, had only thought of being useful to Florestan, without any care whether he could repay or not. He affirmed it, and she did not doubt. In answering for the honour of the vicomte, in supplanting the old comte to listen to the conversation of his son, the duchesse thought that he was going to speak of the abuse of confidence, of which he had been a victim, and that he would be thus entirely exculpated in the eyes of his father.

"Once more," continued Florestan, in an agitated voice, "I say this Petit Jean is a scoundrel; he assured me that he had no other bills than those I withdrew yesterday, and three days ago. I thought this one was in circulation; it was only payable after three months, at Adams & Co., London." "Yes, yes," said the clear and sharp voice of Badinot. "I know, my dear vicomte, that you have adroitly managed your affairs; your forgeries were not to be discovered until you were far away. But you have been caught by those more cunning than yourself."

"Ah! it is very well to tell me this now, wretch that you are!" cried Florestan, furiously; "did you not yourself introduce this person to me, who has negotiated the draughts?" "Come, my dear aristocrat," answered Badinot, coldly; "be calm! You are very skilful in counterfeiting commercial signatures; it is really wonderful; but that is no reason why you should treat your friends with disagreeable familiarity. If you go on in this way—I leave you, arrange as you please."

"Do you think one can preserve their 'sang froid' in such a position? If what you tell me is true—if this complaint is lodged against me to-day, I am lost." "It is exactly as I tell you, unless you should have recourse again to your charming *Providence* with blue eyes." "That is impossible." "Then be resigned. It is a pity it was the last draught—and for twenty-five thousand paltry francs, to go and take the air of the south at Toulon—it is ridiculous, absurd, stupid! How could a cunning man like you suffer yourself to be thus cornered?"

"Mon Dieu! what is to be done? what is to

* Toulon, where the galley-slaves are confined.

be done? nothing that is here belongs to me; I have not twenty Louis of my own." "Your friends!"

"Ah! I owe to all those who could lend me; do you think me such a fool as to have waited until to-day to ask them?" "That is true; pardon me—come, let us talk tranquilly, it is the best way to arrive at a reasonable solution. Just now I wanted to tell you how you were attacked by those who were more cunning than yourself. You did not listen to me."

"Well, speak, if it can be of any use."

"Let us recapitulate: you said to me about two months since, 'I have about one hundred and thirteen thousand francs in draughts on different banking-houses, which have some time to run, can you find means to negotiate them for me, my dear Badinot—'" "Well! what next?"

"Stop! I asked to see these draughts. A certain something told me that these bills were forgeries, although perfectly well done. I did not suspect that you, it is true, possessed a calligraphic talent so far advanced; but having the charge of your fortunes, ever since you had no more fortune, I knew you were completely ruined. I had drawn up the deed by which your horses, your carriages, the furniture of this hotel, belonged to Boyer and to Edwards. It was not, then, wonderful for me to be astonished at seeing you possess commercial securities of so much value, hein?"

"Do me the favour to spare me your astonishment, and let us arrive at the facts."

"Here they are. I had thus not enough experience or timidity to care to meddle directly in affairs of that description; I recommended a third person to you, who, not less shrewd-sighted than I am, suspected the game you wished to play."

"That is impossible—he would not have discounted these bills if he had thought them false."

"How much money did he give you for these 113,000 francs?" "Twenty-five thousand francs cash, and the remainder in debts to be recovered."

"And how much did you ever recover from these?" "Nothing, you know well enough; they were imaginary; but he certainly risked 25,000 francs."

"How unfledged you are, my dear vicomte! Having my commission of 100 Louis to receive, I took good care not to tell this third person the real state of your affairs. He thought you still quite rich, and he knew, besides, that you were adored by a great lady, who was very rich, and who would never leave you in embarrassment; he was then pretty sure to get back what he advanced; he ran some risk, to be sure; but he also had a chance of making a great deal of money, and his calculation was a good one; for, the other day you paid him 100,000 francs to withdraw the forgery of 58,000 francs, and yesterday 30,000 for the second; for this last, he had been contented with receiving its real value. How you procured these 30,000 francs yesterday may the devil run away with me if I know! for you are a man 'unique.' So you see that at the end of the account, if Petit Jean forces you to pay the last draught for 25,000 francs, he will have received from you 155,000 francs for 25,000 francs which he paid you; now, I had reason to say that you were in the hands of those more cunning than yourself." "But why did he tell me that this last draught, which he presented to-day, was negotiated?"

"Not to alarm you, he also had told you that, with the exception of the 58,000 francs, the others were in circulation; the first, once paid, yesterday came the second, and to-day the third." "The scoundrel!" "Listen to me, then: every one for himself, as a celebrated lawyer said, and I like the maxim. But let us talk coolly; this proves to you that Petit Jean (and, between us, I should not be surprised if, notwithstanding his holy reputation, Jacques Ferrand was half concerned in these speculations), this proves to you, I say, that Petit Jean, allured by your first payments, speculates on this last bill, quite sure that your friends will not allow you to be dragged before the *Cour d'Assises*. It is for you to see if these friends are so well used, so drained that not another golden drop can be squeezed from them, for, if in three hours you have not the 25,000 francs, my noble vicomte, you are caged."

"If you were to repeat this to me forever—" "Perhaps you would consent to pluck a last feather from the wing of this generous duchesse." "I repeat to you, it must not be thought of. To find in three hours 25,000 francs more, after all the sacrifices she has already made—it would be madness to think of it."

"To please you, fortunate mortal, one would try an impossibility." "Ah! she has already tried it; this was to borrow 100,000 francs from her husband, and she succeeded; but these are experiments that cannot be tried twice. Let us see, my dear Badinot, until now you have never had any reason to complain of me. I have always been generous; try to obtain some delay from this miserable Petit Jean. You know I always can find means to recompense those who serve me; this last affair once hushed, I will take a new flight—you shall be content with me."

"Petit Jean is as inflexible as you are unreasonable."

"I!" "Try only to interest once more your generous friend in your sad fate. The devil! tell her right out the truth; not as you have already said, that you are the dupe, but that you are the forger himself." "No, never will I make such an acknowledgment; it would be shame without any advantage." "Do you prefer that she should learn it to-morrow by the *Gazette des Tribunaux*?"

"I have three hours left—I can flee."

"And where will you go without money? Judge now! on the contrary, this last forgery taken up, you will find yourself in a superb position; you would have no more debts. Come, come, promise me to speak once more to the duchesse. You are such a rake, you know how to make yourself so interesting in spite of your faults; at the very worst, perhaps, you will be esteemed the less, or even no more, but you will be lifted out of this scrape. Come, promise me to see your friend, and I will run to Petit Jean, and do my best to obtain an hour or two more."

"Hell! must I drink of shame to the very dregs!"

"Come, now! good luck—be tender, charming, fond; I run to Petit Jean: you will find me here until three o'clock; later it will no longer be in time: the office of the *procureur du roi* is closed after four o'clock." And Monsieur Badinot took his departure.

When the door was closed, Florestan was heard to cry, in profound despair, "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

During this conversation, which unmasked to the comte the infamy of his son, and to Ma-

dame de Lucenay the infamy of the man whom she had so blindly loved, both remained immovable, scarcely breathing, under the weight of this frightful revelation.

It would be impossible to describe the mute eloquence of the sorrowful scene which passed between this young woman and the comte, when there was no longer any doubt of the crime of Florestan. Extending his arm towards the room where his son remained, the old man smiled with bitter irony, cast a withering look on Madame de Lucenay, and seemed to say to her,

"Behold him for whom you have braved all shame, made every sacrifice! behold him you have reproached me for abandoning!"

The duchesse understood the look; for a moment she hung her head under the weight of her shame. The lesson was terrible.

Then, by degrees, to the cruel anxiety which had contracted the features of Madame de Lucenay, succeeded a kind of noble indignation. The inexcusable faults of this woman were at least palliated by the fidelity of her love, by the boldness of her devotion, by the grandeur of her generosity, by the frankness of her character, and by her inexorable aversion for everything that was cowardly and dishonest.

Still too young, too handsome, too much sought after, to experience the humility of having been made use of, this proud and decided woman, once the illusion of love having vanished, felt neither hatred nor anger; instantaneously, without any transition, a mortal disgust, an icy disdain, killed her affection, until then so lively; it was no longer a woman deceived by her lover, but it was a woman of *haut ton* discovering that a man of her society was a cheat and a forger.

In supposing even that some circumstances might have extenuated the ignominy of Florestan, Madame de Lucenay would not have admitted them; according to her views, the man who overstepped certain limits of honour, either through vice or weakness, *no longer existed in her eyes, honourableness* being for her a question of *existence or non-existence*. The only sorrowful feeling experienced by the duchesse was excited by the terrible effect which this unexpected revelation produced on the comte, her old friend. For some moments he appeared not to see nor hear; his eyes were fixed, his head hung down, his arms suspended, his paleness livid, and from time to time a convulsive sigh escaped, from his bosom. With a man as resolute as he was energetic, such a state of dejection was more alarming than the most furious bursts of rage.

Madame de Lucenay looked at him with much anxiety. "Courage, my friend," said she to him, in a low tone: "for you, for me, for this man—I know what remains for me to do."

The old man looked at her fixedly; then, as if he had been aroused from his stupor by some violent shock, he raised his head, his features assumed a threatening appearance, and, forgetting that his son might hear him, he cried,

"And I, also, for you, for me, for this man—I know what I have to do." "Who is there?" cried Florestan, surprised.

Madame de Lucenay, fearing to meet the vicomte, disappeared through the small door, and descended the private staircase.

Florestan, having again demanded who was there, and receiving no answer, entered the saloon.

The long beard of the old man changed him so much, he was so poorly dressed, that his son,

who had not seen him for many years, did not at first recognise him; he advanced rapidly towards him with a menacing air, and said, "Who are you? What do you want here?"

"I am the husband of this woman!" answered the comte, showing the portrait of Madame de Saint Rémy.

"My father!" cried Florestan, retreating in alarm; and he endeavoured to recall to mind the features so long forgotten. Erect, formidable, his looks irritated, his face purple with rage, his white hair thrown back, his arms crossed on his breast, the comte, overawed, confounded his son, who, with his head down, dared not to raise his eyes upon him. Yet M. de Saint Rémy, from some secret motive, made a violent effort to remain calm and to conceal his feelings of resentment.

"My father!" said Florestan, in a faltering voice; "you were there?" "I was there!"

"You have heard—?" "All!"

"Ah!" cried the vicomte, mournfully, concealing his face in his hands. There was a moment's pause. Florestan, at first as much astonished as vexed at the unexpected apparition of his father, soon began to think what he could make out of this incident. "All is not lost," said he to himself; "the presence of my father is a stroke of fate. He knows all; he will not have his name dishonoured; he is not rich, but he must have more than 25,000 francs. Let us play close—address, emotion, and a little tenderness. I will let the duchesse alone, and I am saved!"

Then, giving to his charming features an expression of mournful dejection, moistening his eyes with the tears of repentance, assuming his most thrilling tones, his most pathetic manner, he cried, joining his hands with a gesture of despair,

"Ah! my father! I am very unhappy! after so many years—to see you again, and at such a moment! I must appear so culpable to you! But deign to listen to me, I entreat you—I supplicate you, permit me, not to justify myself, but to explain to you my conduct: will you, my father?"

M. de Saint Rémy answered not a word; his features remained immovable; he seated himself in a "fauteuil," and, with his chin resting on the palm of his hand, he looked at the vicomte in silence.

If Florestan had known the thoughts which filled the mind of his father with hatred, fury, and vengeance, alarmed at the apparent calmness of the comte, he would not have tried to dupe him, neither more nor less than a "bon homme Geroute."

But, ignorant of the suspicions attached to his birth, ignorant of the fault of his mother, Florestan doubted not the success of his trick, believing he had only to soften a father who, at once a misanthrope and very proud of his name, would be capable, rather than see his name dishonoured, to decide on any sacrifice.

"My father," he resumed, timidly, "permit me to try, not to exculpate myself, but to tell you how, from involuntary misleadings, I have reached, almost in spite of myself, actions—infamous—I acknowledge." The vicomte took the silence of his father for a tacit consent, and continued,

"When I had the misfortune to lose my mother—my poor mother, who loved me so well—I was not twenty. I found myself alone, without

counsel, without protection. Master of a considerable fortune, accustomed to luxury from my childhood, I had made it a habit, a want. Ignorant of the difficulty of earning money, I lavished it without measure. Unfortunately—and I say unfortunately, because this ruined me—my expenses, foolish as they were, by their elegance were remarkable. By good taste I eclipsed people who were ten times richer than I was. This first success intoxicated me. I became a man of luxury as one becomes a warrior or a statesman; yes, I loved luxury, not from vulgar ostentation, but I loved it as the painter loves a picture, as the poet loves poetry; like every other artist, I was jealous of my work; and my work was my luxury. I sacrificed everything to its perfection. I wished it fine, grand, complete, splendidly harmonious in everything, from my stables to my table, from my dress to my house. I wished in everything to be a model of taste and elegance. As an artist, in fine, I was greedy of the applauses of the crowd, and of the admiration of people of fashion; this success, so rare, I obtained.”

In speaking thus, the features of Florestan lost by degrees their hypocritical expression, his eyes shone with a kind of enthusiasm; he told the truth; he had been at first reduced by this rather uncommon manner of understanding luxury. He looked inquiringly at his father; he thought he appeared rather softened.

He resumed, with growing warmth, “Oracle and regulator of the fashions, my praise or censure made the law: I was quoted, copied, extolled, admired, and that by the best company in Paris, that is to say, Europe—the world. The women partook of the general infatuation; the most charming disputed for the pleasure of coming to some very select fêtes which I gave, and everywhere, and always, nothing was heard but of the incomparable elegance and exquisite taste of these fêtes, which the *millionnaires* could neither equal nor eclipse; in fine, I was what one calls *le Roi de la mode*.* This word will tell you all, my father, if you understand it.”

“I understand it, and I am sure that at the galleys you would invent some refined elegance in the manner of carrying your chain, that will become the *fashion* in the yard, and will be called *à la Saint Rémy*,” said the old man, with bitter irony; then he added, “And Saint Rémy is *my name*!”

It caused Florestan to exercise much control over himself to conceal the wound caused by this sarcasm.

He continued in a more humble tone: “Alas! my father, it is not from pride that I recall the fact of this success; for, I repeat to you, this success ruined me. Sought after, envied, flattered, praised, not by interested parasites, but by people whose position much surpassed mine, and over whom I only had the advantage derived from elegance—which is to luxury what taste is to the arts—my head was turned; I did not calculate that my fortune must be spent in a few years; little did I heed it. Could I renounce this feverish, dazzling life, in which pleasures succeeded to pleasures, enjoyments to enjoyments, fêtes to fêtes, intoxications of all sorts to enchantments of all sorts? Oh! if you knew, my father, what it is to be everywhere noticed as the hero of the day; to hear the whisperings which announce your entrance into a saloon; to

hear the women say—‘It is he!—there he is!’ Oh! if you knew—”

“I know,” said the old man, interrupting his son, and without changing his position; “I know. Yes, the other day, in a public square, there was a crowd; suddenly I heard a noise, like that with which you are received when you go anywhere; then the looks of all, the women especially, were fixed on a very handsome young man, just as they are fixed on you, and they pointed him out, just as they do you, saying, ‘It is he!—there he is!’ just exactly as they say of you.”

“But this man, my father?”

“Was a forger they were placing in the pillory.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Florestan, with suppressed rage; then feigning profound affliction, he added, “My father, have you no pity—what can I say to you now? I do not seek to deny my faults—I only wish to explain to you the fatal cause of them. Ah, well! yes, should you again overwhelm me with cruel sarcasms, I will try to go to the end of this confession—I will try to make you understand this feverish vanity which has ruined me, because then, perhaps, you will pity me. Yes, for one pities a fool—and I was a fool. Shutting my eyes, I abandoned myself to the dazzling vortex, into which I dragged along with me the most charming women, the most amiable men. Stop myself—could I do it? As well say to the poet who exhausts himself, and whose genius is consuming his health, ‘Pause in the midst of the inspiration which carries you away!’ No, I could not: I—I! abdicate this royalty which I exercised, and return, ruined, ashamed, mocked, to the state of a plebeian—unknown; give this triumph to my rivals, whom I had until then defied, ruled, crushed! No, no, I could not! not voluntarily, at least. The fatal day came, when, for the first time, my money was wanting. I was as surprised, as if this moment never could happen. Yet I had still my horses, my carriages, and the furniture of this house. My debts paid, I should still have 60,000 francs—perhaps—what should I do with this trifle? Then, my father, I took the first step in infamy. I was still honest. I had only spent what belonged to me: but then I began to contract debts which I could not pay. I sold all that I possessed to two of my people, in order to settle with them, and to be able, for six months longer, to enjoy this luxury which intoxicated me, in spite of my creditors. To provide for my wants at play and foolish expenses, I borrowed, in the first place, from the Jews; then, to pay the Jews, from my friends. These resources exhausted, commenced a new era in my life. From an honest man I had become a *chevalier d’industrie*, but I was not yet criminal. However, I hesitated. I wished to take a violent resolution. I had proved in several duels that I was not afraid of death. I thought I would kill myself!”

“Ah, bah! really?” said the comte, ironically.

“Yo do not believe me, my father?”

“It was too soon, or too late!” added the old man, quite immovable, and in the same attitude.

Florestan, thinking he had alarmed his father in speaking to him of his project of suicide, thought it necessary to get up the scene again for a little stage effect. He opened a closet and took from it a little “flacon” of green crystal, and said to the comte, in placing it on the mantelpiece; “An Italian quack sold me this poison.”

* King of fashion.

"And—it was for yourself—this poison?" said the old man, still leaning on his elbow.

Florestan understood the bearing of his father's words. His face now expressed real indignation, for he spoke the truth. One day, he had had a fantasy to kill himself—an ephemeral fantasy; people of his stamp are too cowardly to resolve coldly and without witnesses upon death, which they will boldly meet in a duel through a point of honour. He cried, then, in a tone of truth, "I have fallen very low, but at least not so low as that, my father! It was for myself I reserved the poison!"

"And you were afraid?" said the comte, without change of position.

"I confess it, I recoiled before this dreadful extremity; nothing was yet desperate; the persons whom I owed were rich, and could wait. At my age, with my relations, I hoped for a moment, if not to repair my fortune, at least to assure myself an honourable independent position in its place. Several of my friends, perhaps less capable than myself, had made rapid strides in diplomacy. I had a velleity of ambition. I had only to request, and I was attached to the legation of Gerolstein. Unfortunately, some days after this nomination, a gambling debt contracted with a man I hated, placed me in the most cruel embarrassment. I had exhausted every resource. A fatal idea occurred to me. Believing myself certain of impunity, I committed an infamous action. You see, my father, I conceal nothing from you. I confess the ignominy of my conduct. I seek to extenuate nothing. One of two resolutions remain for me to take, and I have now to decide which. The first is to kill myself, and to leave your name dishonoured, for if I do not pay to-day even the 25,000 francs, the complaint is made, the affair known, and, dead or living, I am ruined. The second means is to throw myself in the arms of my father, to say to you, save your son, save your name from infamy, and I swear to leave to-morrow for Africa, to enlist as a soldier, and either to be killed or to return some day honourably reinstated. What I now tell you, my father, is true. In face of the extremity which overwhelms me, I have no other way. Decide; either I die covered with shame, or, thanks to you, I will live to repair my faults. These are not the threats and words of a young man, my father. I am now twenty-five; I bear your name; I have courage enough either to kill myself, or to become a soldier, for I will not go to the galleys." The comte arose.

"I will not have my name dishonoured," said he, coldly, to Florestan.

"Ah, my father! my saviour!" cried the vicomte, warmly; and he was about to throw himself into the arms of his father, when he, with an icy gesture, calmed this *entraînement*.

"They wait for you until three o'clock, at the house of this man who has the forgery?"

"Yes, my father; and it is now two o'clock."

"Let us pass into your cabinet—give me something to write with." "Here, my father."

The comte seated himself before the desk of his son, and wrote with a firm hand:

"I engage to pay this night, at ten o'clock, the 25,000 francs which are owed by my son."

"COMTE DE SAINT RÉMY."

"Your creditor insists upon having the money; notwithstanding his threats, this engagement of mine will make him consent to a new delay; he

can go to M. Dupont, banker in the Rue de Richelieu, No. 7, who will inform him of the value of this note."

"Oh, my father! how ever can—"

"You may expect me to-night; at ten o'clock I will bring you the money. Let your creditor be here."

"Yes, my father, and after to-morrow I start for Africa. You shall see if I am ungrateful! Then, perhaps, when I have reinstated myself, you will accept my thanks."

"You owe me nothing; I have said my name shall be no farther dishonoured, it shall not be," said M. de Saint Rémy, calmly; and taking his cane, which he had placed on the bureau, he turned towards the door. "My father, your hand at least!" said Florestan, in a supplicating tone.

"Here, to-night, at ten o'clock," replied the comte, refusing his hand. And he departed.

"Saved!" cried Florestan, joyfully, "saved!" then, after a moment's reflection, he added, "saved! almost. No matter; so far good. Perhaps to-night I will acknowledge the *other thing*; he is in train; he will not stop half way and let his first sacrifice be useless, because he refuses a second. Yet why tell him? Who will know it? Never mind; if nothing is discovered, I will keep the money that he will give me to pay this last debt. I had a great deal of trouble to move him, this devil of a man! The bitterness of his sarcasms made me doubt my success; but my threat of suicide, the fear of having his name dishonoured decided him; that was the lucky stroke. He is, doubtless, not so poor as he pretends to be, if he possesses a hundred thousand francs. He must have saved money, living as he does. Once more, I say his coming was a lucky chance. He has a cross look, but, at the bottom, I think he is a good fellow; but I must hasten to this 'huissier'!"

He rang the bell. M. Boyer appeared.

"Why did you not inform me that my father was here? you are very negligent."

"Twice I endeavoured to speak to M. le Vicomte when he came through the garden with M. Badinot; but M. le Vicomte, probably preoccupied by his conversation with M. Badinot, made a motion with his hand not to be interrupted. I did not permit myself to insist. I should be deeply wounded if M. le Vicomte could believe me guilty of negligence." "Very well; tell Edwards to harness immediately *Orion*—no—*Flower*, to the cabriolet." M. Boyer bowed respectfully; as he was about to retire; some one knocked at the door. "Come in!" said Florestan; a second "valet de chambre" appeared, holding in his hand a small "plateau" of silver, gilt. M. Boyer took hold of the "plateau" with a kind of jealous officiousness, and came and presented it to the vicomte. Florestan took from it a rather voluminous envelope, sealed with black wax. The two valets retired ceremoniously. The vicomte opened the package. It contained twenty-five thousand francs, in treasury notes, with no other information.

"Decidedly," cried he, with joy, "the day is lucky—sacred! this time, completely saved. I shall go to the jeweller's—and yet—perhaps—no, let us wait—they can have no suspicion of me—twenty-five thousand francs are good to keep; *pardieu!* I was a fool ever to doubt my star; at the moment it seems most obscured, does it not appear more brilliant than ever? But where does this money come from? the writing of the

address is unknown to me; let me look at the seal—the cipher; yes, yes, I am not mistaken—an N. and an L.—it is Clothilde! How has she known?—and not a word—it is strange! How apropos! Oh! mon Dieu! I reflect—I made a rendezvous for this morning—these threats of Badinot upset me. I have forgotten Clothilde—after having waited some time, she has gone. Doubtless, this is sent as a delicate hint that she fears I shall forget her on account of my monetary embarrassments. Yes, it is an indirect reproach for not addressing myself to her as usual. Good Clothilde—always the same!—generous as a queen! What a pity to come again from her—still so handsome! Sometimes I regret it; but I have never asked her until at the last extremity; I have been forced to it.” “The cabriolet of M. le Vicomte is ready,” said M. Boyer.

“Who brought this letter?”

“I am uninformed, Monsieur le Vicomte.”

“Exactly—I will ask at the door; but tell me, is there no one in the rez-de-chaussée?” added the vicomte, looking at Boyer in a significant manner.

“There is no longer any one, M. le Vicomte.”

“I was not deceived,” thought Florestan. “Clothilde has waited for me, and has gone away.”

“If Monsieur le Vicomte would have the goodness to grant me two minutes?” said Boyer.

“Speak, and make haste.”

“Edwards and I have understood that M. le Duc de Montbrison was about to establish himself; if Monsieur le Vicomte would have the goodness to propose to let him have his house all furnished, as well as the stables, it would be a good occasion for us to dispose of all, and, perhaps, might also suit M. le Vicomte.”

“Pardieu! you are right, Boyer; for myself, I should much prefer it. I will see Montbrison, and will speak to him about it. What are your conditions?”

“Monsieur le Vicomte understands—that we ought to try to profit as much as we can by his generosity.”

“And gain by your bargain? nothing can be plainer! Come, what is the price?”

“For the whole, two hundred and sixty thousand francs, Monsieur le Vicomte.”

“How much do you gain, you and Edwards?”

“About forty thousand francs, Monsieur le Vicomte.”

“Very pretty! However, so much the better; for, after all, I am satisfied with you, and if I had had a will to make, I should have left this sum to you and Edwards.” And the vicomte went out to go, in the first place, to his creditor and to Madame de Lucenay, whom he did not suspect of having overheard his conversation with Badinot.

CHAPTER X.

THE INTERVIEW.

THE Hôtel de Lucenay was one of those princely habitations of the Faubourg Saint Germain which the *terrain perdu** renders so magnificent. A modern house could have been placed with ease in the space occupied by the staircase of one of these palaces; and an entire ‘quartier’ on the ground they covered.

* Literally, lost ground.

Towards nine o'clock in the evening of this same day, the enormous “porte cochère” of this hotel was opened to a glittering *coupé*, which, after having described a scientific curve in the immense court, stopped before a covered porch which led to a first antechamber.

While the stampings of the two vigorous and mettlesome horses resounded on the pavement, a gigantic footman opened the emblazoned door, and a young man descended slowly from this brilliant vehicle, and not less slowly mounted the five or six steps of the porch.

This young man was the Vicomte de Saint Rémy.

On leaving his creditor, who, satisfied with the engagement made by the Comte de Saint Rémy, had granted the delay asked, and agreed to come to Rue Chaillot at ten o'clock, Florestan was come to Madame de Lucenay to thank her for the new service she had rendered him; but, not having met the duchesse in the morning, he came in great spirits, certain to find her at the *prima sera*, an hour she habitually reserved for him.

From the obsequiousness of the two footmen of the antechamber who ran to open the door as soon as they recognised the carriage of Florestan; from the profoundly respectful air with which the rest of the liveried servants spontaneously arose as the vicomte passed, one could easily see that he was looked upon as the *second*, if not the real master of the mansion.

When the Duc de Lucenay entered his house, his umbrella in his hand, and his feet cased in huge overshoes (he detested to ride in the daytime), the same domestic evolutions were repeated, and always respectfully; yet, to the eyes of an observer, there was a great difference of expression between the reception given to the *marri*, and that which was reserved for the lover.

The same respectful eagerness was manifested in the saloon of the valets de chambre when Florestan entered there; in a moment, one of them preceded him, to announce M. le Vicomte to Madame de Lucenay.

Never had Florestan been more concealed; never did he feel more easy—more sure of himself—more irresistible. The *victory* which he had gained in the morning over his father; the new proof of *attachment* from Madame de Lucenay; the joy at having so miraculously escaped from so cruel a position; his renewed confidence in his star, gave to his handsome face an expression of boldness and good-humour, which rendered him still more seducing. In fine, he never was more pleased with himself; and he had reason. * * * * *

A last glance in a mirror completed the excellent opinion that Florestan had of himself.

The valet de chambre opened the folding doors of the saloon, and announced,

“Monsieur le Vicomte de Saint Rémy!”

The astonishment and indignation of the duchesse were indescribable. She thought that the comte must have told his son that she also had overheard all.

We have said before, that, on learning the infamy of Florestan, the love of Madame de Lucenay was at once changed into utter disdain.

Madame de Lucenay being engaged out that evening, was, although *without diamonds*, dressed with her usual taste and magnificence: this splendid toilet; the rouge which she wore boldly; her beauty, quite striking at night; her

figure of *déesse marchant sur les nues*, rendered still more striking a dignity, which no one possessed more than she did, and which she pushed, when it was necessary, to a most superlative haughtiness.

The proud, determined character of the duchesse is known to the reader; let him imagine her look, when the vicomte, smiling, advanced towards her, and said in loving tones, "My dear Clotilde, how kind you are! how much you—" The vicomte could not finish. The duchesse was seated, and had not stirred; but her actions, the glance of her eye, revealed a contempt at once so calm and so withering, that Florestan stopped short.

He could not say a word, or make a step in advance.

Never had Madame de Lucenay conducted herself thus towards him. He could not believe it to be the same woman whom he had always found so tender and affectionate. His first surprise over, Florestan was ashamed of his weakness: he resumed his habitual audacity; making a step towards Madame de Lucenay to take her hand, he said to her in the most caressing manner, "Mon Dieu! Clotilde, how is this? I have never seen you so handsome, and yet—" "Ah! this is too impudent!" cried the duchesse, recoiling with such unequivocal disgust and pride, that Florestan once more was surprised and confounded. However, assuming a little assurance, he said to her,

"You will inform me at least, Clotilde, the cause of this sudden change? What have I done? What do you wish?" Without replying to him, Madame de Lucenay looked at him, as is vulgarly said, from head to foot, with an expression so insulting, that Florestan felt the flush of resentment mount to his forehead, and he cried, "I know, madame, you are habitually very hasty in your ruptures. Is it a rupture you wish?"

"The pretension is curious!" said Madame de Lucenay, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "Know that when a lackey robs me—I do not break with him—I turn him out." "Madame!" "Let us put a stop to this," said the duchesse, in a decided and haughty tone. "Your presence is repugnant to me! What do you want here? Have you not got your money?" "I was right then. I guessed it was you. These twenty-five thousand francs—"

"Your last *forgery* is withdrawn, is it not? The honour of your family name is saved. It is well. Go away. Ah! believe—I much regret this money—it would have succeeded so many honest people; but it was necessary to think of your father's shame and of mine."

"Then, Clotilde, you know all? Oh! look you now; nothing remains for me but to die," cried Florestan in the most pathetic and despairing tone. A burst of indignant laughter from the duchesse replied to this tragical exclamation, and she added, between two fits of hilarity,

"Mon Dieu! I never would have thought that infamy could make itself so ridiculous!"

"Madame!" cried Florestan, almost blind with rage.

The folding doors were thrown open suddenly, and a valet announced, "M. Le Duc de Montbrison!"

Notwithstanding his habitual self-command, Florestan could hardly restrain himself, which a man more accustomed to society than the duke would certainly have remarked.

M. de Montbrison was scarcely eighteen.

Let the reader imagine the charming face of a young girl, fair, white, and red, whose rosy lips and smooth chin shall be slightly shaded with an incipient beard; add to this, large, brown eyes, still slightly timid, a figure as graceful as that of the duchesse, and he will have, perhaps, an idea of the appearance of this young duke, the *cherubino* the most ideal that a countess and a Susanna had ever *coiffé* with a woman's cap, after admiring the whiteness of his ivory neck.*

The vicomte had the weakness or the audacity to remain. "How kind you are, Conrad, to have thought of me to-night!" said Madame de Lucenay in the most affectionate tone, extending her beautiful hand to the young duke, who hastened to shake hands with his cousin; but Clotilde shrugged her shoulders, and said to him gayly, "You may kiss them, cousin; you wear your gloves."

"Pardon me, cousin," said the youth; and he pressed his lips on the charming hand she presented him.

"What are you going to do this evening, Conrad?" demanded the duchesse, without taking the least notice of Florestan.

"Nothing, cousin; when I leave here I am going to my club." "Not at all; you shall accompany us, M. de Lucenay and me, to Madame de Senneval; it is her night; she has already asked me several times to present you."

"My cousin, I shall be too happy to place myself under your orders."

"And besides, frankly, I do not like to see you so soon accustom yourself to this taste for clubs; you have every requisite to be perfectly well received, and even sought after in society. So you must go oftener." "Yes! cousin."

"And as I am with you pretty much on the footing of a grandmother, my dear Conrad, I am disposed to be very maternal. You are emancipated, it is true; but still I think you will have need for a long time of a tutor. And you must absolutely accept of me."

"With joy, with delight, my cousin!" said the young duke with vivacity.

It is impossible to describe the mute rage of Florestan, who remained standing, leaning against the chimney-piece.

Neither the duke nor Clotilde paid any attention to him. Knowing how quickly Madame de Lucenay decided on anything, he imagined that she pushed her audacity and contempt so far that she wished to play the coquette openly and before him with the young duke.

It was not so; the duchesse felt for her young cousin an affection quite maternal. But the young duke was so handsome, he seemed so happy at the gracious reception of his young cousin, that Florestan was exasperated by jealousy, or rather by pride; his heart writhed under the cruel stings of envy, inspired by Conrad de Montbrison, who, rich and charming, entered so splendidly this life of pleasures, which he was leaving—he, ruined, despised, disgraced.

M. de Saint Rémy was brave—with the bravery of the head, if we may so express it, which, through anger or vanity, causes one to face a duel; but, vile and corrupted, he had not that courage of the heart which triumphs over evil propensities, or which, at least, gives one the energy to escape infamy by a voluntary death.

* This refers to a scene in the *Marriage of Figaro*.

Florestan at the sovereign contempt of the duchesse, thinking he saw a successor in the young duke, M. de Saint Rémy resolved to match the insolence of Clotilde, and, if it was necessary, to seek a quarrel with Conrad. The duchesse, irritated at the audacity of Florestan, did not look at him, and M. de Montbrison, in his attraction towards his cousin, forgetting the usages of society, had neither bowed nor said a word to the vicomte, whom he knew perfectly.

He advanced towards Conrad, whose back was turned towards him, touched his arm lightly, and said, in an ironical and dry tone, "Bonsoir, monsieur. A thousand pardons for not having perceived you before."

M. de Montbrison, feeling that he had been wanting in politeness, turned quickly, and said, cordially, "Monsieur, I am confused, truly; but I dare hope that my cousin, who has caused my want of attention, will be pleased to make my excuses, and—"

"Conrad!" said the duchesse, incensed at the impudence of Florestan, who persisted to remain and brave her, "Conrad, it is right; no excuses; it is not worth the trouble."

M. de Montbrison, believing that his cousin reproached him in a playful manner for being too formal, said gayly to the vicomte, who was white with rage, "I shall not insist, monsieur, since my cousin forbids. You see her tutelage commences."

"And this tutelage will not stop there; my dear sir, be quite assured. Thus, in this view of the case (which Madame la Duchesse will readily approve, I do not doubt), an idea has just struck me to make you a proposition."

"To me, monsieur?" said Conrad, beginning to dislike the sneering tone of Florestan.

"To yourself. I leave in some days for the readiness of Gerolstein, to which I am attached. I wish to dispose of my house all furnished, and my stables; you also should make an arrangement," and the vicomte emphasized these last words, looking at Madame de Lucenay. "It would be very 'piquant,' would it not, Madame la Duchesse?"

"I do not comprehend you, monsieur," said M. de Montbrison, more and more astonished.

"I will tell you, Conrad, why you cannot accept the offer which has been made you," said Clotilde.

"And why cannot monsieur accept my offer, Madame la Duchesse?" "My dear Conrad, that which is proposed to be sold to you, is already sold to others. You comprehend? You would have the inconvenience of being robbed as on the highway."

Florestan bit his lips with rage. "Take care, madame!" cried he. "How? threats here, monsieur?" said Conrad. "Come, now, Conrad, pay no attention," said Madame de Lucenay, taking a "pastille" from a "bonbonnière," with imperturbable sang froid. "A man of honour ought not, nor may not commit himself with monsieur. If he insists, I will tell you wherefore."

A terrible scene was perhaps about to take place, when the doors were again thrown open, and M. le Duc de Lucenay entered, and, according to custom, with much noise and disturbance.

"How, my dear! are you ready?" said he to

his wife. "Why, it is astonishing! why, it is surprising! Good-evening, Saint Rémy; good-evening, Conrad. Ah! you see, before you the most despairing of men; that is to say, I cannot sleep; I cannot eat; I am stupefied; I cannot get used to it. Poor D'Harville! what an event!" And M. de Lucenay, throwing himself backward on a kind of "causeuse" with a double back, threw his hat from him with a gesture of despair, and, crossing his left leg over the right knee, he took his foot in his hand, continuing to utter exclamations of grief.

The emotions of Conrad and Florestan had time to be subdued before M. de Lucenay, the least observing man in the world, had time to perceive anything.

Madame de Lucenay, not from embarrassment—she was not a woman to be untimely embarrassed—but the presence of Florestan was repugnant and insupportable, said to the duke, "When you are ready, we will go. I am to present Conrad to Madame de Sennerval."

"No, no, no!" cried the duke, abandoning his foot to seize a cushion, which he struck violently with his two fists, to the great alarm of Clotilde, who, at the unexpected cries of her husband, bounded from her chair.

"Mon Dieu! monsieur, what is the matter?" said she. "You quite shock me."

"No!" repeated the duke; and, throwing down the cushion, he arose quickly, and began to walk about, violently gesticulating. "I cannot help but think of poor D'Harville; and you, Saint Rémy?"

"Truly, a frightful event!" said the vicomte, who, with hatred and rage in his heart, sought the looks of M. de Montbrison; but he, after the last words of his cousin, not from want of courage, but from pride, turned away from a man so terribly debased.

"Pray, monsieur," said the duchesse to her husband, "do not regret M. d'Harville in a manner so noisy, and, above all, so singular. Ring, if you please, for my servants."

"Only to think," said M. de Lucenay, seizing hold of the bell-pull, "three days ago he was full of life, and now, what remains of him? Nothing, nothing, nothing!" These last three exclamations were accompanied by three pulls of the bell so violent that the cord broke which he held in his hand, separated from the upper spring, and fell upon a candelabra filled with waxlights, and overturned two; the one fell upon the mantelpiece, and broke a beautiful little vase of Sevres china; the other rolled on the ground, and set fire to a rug of ermine, which, for a moment in a blaze, was almost immediately extinguished by Conrad.

At the same moment, two "valets de chambre," summoned by the loud ringing, arrived in haste, and found M. de Lucenay with the bell-rope in his hand, the duchesse laughing violently at this ridiculous "cascade" of candles, and M. de Montbrison partaking the hilarity of his cousin.

M. de Saint Rémy alone did not laugh.

M. de Lucenay, quite habituated to these kind of accidents, preserved a serious countenance; he threw the rope to one of the servants, and said, "The carriage of Madame Clotilde." Becoming a little more calm, he cried,

"Really, monsieur, there is no one else in the world but yourself who could have caused a laugh at so lamentable an event."

"Lamenable! You may well say frightful!

* Box for sugar-plums.

horrible! Now, only see, since yesterday I have been thinking how many persons there are, even in my own family, whom I would rather should have died than poor D'Harville. My nephew Emberval, for instance, who is so tiresome with his stammering; or your aunt Merinville, who is always talking of her nerves, her blues, and who swallows every day, while waiting for her dinner, an abominable potpie, just like a porrière! Do you think much of your aunt Merinville?"

"Allons donc, monsieur, you are crazy!" said the duchesse, shrugging her shoulders.

"But it is true," answered the duke; "one would give a hundred indifferent persons for a friend. Is it not so, Saint Rémy?" "Doubtless."

"It is always this old story of the tailor. Do you know, Conrad, the history of the tailor?" "No, cousin."

"You will understand at once the allegory. A tailor was condemned to be hung; there was no other tailor in the village; what do the inhabitants do? They said to the judge, 'Monsieur le Juge, we have only one tailor, and we have three shoemakers; if it is all the same to you to hang one of the shoemakers in the place of the tailor, we shall have quite enough with two shoemakers.' Do you comprehend the allegory, Conrad?"

"Yes, cousin." "And you, Saint Rémy?" "I, also." "The carriage of Madame la Duchesse," said one of the servants.

"Ah! ça, but why do you not wear your diamonds?" said M. de Lucenay, unexpectedly; "with this dress they would look devilishly well!"

Saint Rémy shuddered.

"For one poor little time that we go out together," continued the duke, "you might have honoured me with your diamonds. They are really very handsome. Have you ever seen them, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes; monsieur knows them perfectly," said Clothilde. "Give me your arm, Conrad."

M. de Lucenay followed the duchesse with Saint Rémy, who was almost beside himself with rage.

"Are you not coming with us to the Senneval's?" said M. de Lucenay to him.

"No; impossible," answered he, hastily.

"Ah! now, Saint Rémy, Madame de Senneval, there is another one—what do I say, one?—two—whom I would sacrifice willingly; for her husband is also on my list." "What list?"

"Of those persons whom I would willingly see die, if poor D'Harville could have remained."

While M. de Montbrison was assisting his cousin with her mantle, M. de Lucenay said to him,

"Since you are going with us, Conrad, order your carriage to follow ours, unless you will go, Saint Rémy; then you can give me a place, and I will tell you a story worth two of the tailor's."

"I thank you," said Florestan, dryly, "I cannot accompany you." "Then, 'au revoir,' my dear. Have you had a dispute with my wife? See, she is getting into the carriage without speaking to you?"

"My cousin?" said Conrad, waiting through deference for the duke. "Get in, get in!" cried he; and stopping for a moment in the porch, he admired the equipage of the vicomte.

"Are these your sorrels, Saint Rémy?"

"Yes." "And your fat Edwards—what a

'tournure!' Just see how he holds his horses in his hands! I must confess, there is no one but this devil of a Saint Rémy who has the best of everything." "Madame de Lucenay and her cousin are waiting; 'mon cher,'" said Florestan, with bitterness. "It is true, 'pardieu'—how rude I am! Au revoir, Saint Rémy. Ah! I forgot; if you have nothing better to do, come and dine with us to-morrow. Lord Dudley has sent me from Scotland some grouse and heath-cocks. Just imagine something monstrous. It is agreed, is it not?" And the duke joined his wife and Conrad.

Saint Rémy remained alone, and saw the carriage depart; his own drew up, and as he took his seat he cast a look of rage, hatred, and despair on this house, where he had so often entered as a master, and which he now left, ignominiously driven away. "Home," said he, roughly. "To the hotel!" said the footman to Edwards, shutting the door. The bitter and sorrowful thoughts of Florestan on his way home can easily be imagined.

As he entered, Boyer, who was waiting for him at the lodge, said, "M. le Comte is upstairs; he awaits M. le Vicomte." "It is well." "There is also a man there, a man to whom M. le Vicomte has given an appointment at ten o'clock."

"Well, well." "Oh! what a soirée!" said Florestan as he was going up stairs to meet his father, whom he found in the saloon, where the interview of the morning had taken place.

"A thousand pardons! my father, for not being here when you arrived; but I—"

"The man who holds this forged draught, is he here?"

"Yes, my father, he is below."

"Send for him to come up." Florestan rang the bell; Boyer answered. "Tell M. Petit Jean to come here." "Yes, Monsieur le Vicomte;" and Boyer disappeared. "How kind you are, my father, to remember your promise?"

"I always remember what I promise."

"How grateful! How can I ever prove—"

"I will not have my name dishonoured; it shall not be."

"It shall not be! no; and it shall never be more, I swear to you, my father." The comte looked at his son in a singular manner, and repeated, "No, it shall never be more!" Then, with a sneering laugh, he added, "You are a conjurer!" "It is that I read my resolution on my heart."

The comte made no reply, but walked up and down the room, with his hands in the large pockets of his overcoat.

"Monsieur Petit Jean," said Boyer, introducing a man with a low and cunning expression of face.

"Where is this draught?" said the comte.

"Here it is, monsieur," said Petit Jean (a man of straw of Jacques Ferrand's), presenting it to the comte.

"Is that it?" said he to his son.

"Yes, my father." The comte drew from the pocket of his waistcoat twenty-five notes of one thousand francs each, handed them to his son, and said, "Pay!" Florestan paid, and took the draught with a profound sigh of satisfaction.

M. Petit Jean placed the bills carefully in an old pocketbook, and retired. M. de Saint Rémy went with him out of the room, while Florestan prudently tore up the note.

"At least, the twenty-five thousand francs from

Clothilde remain. If nothing is discovered, it is a consolation. But how she has treated me! Ah! now, what can my father have to say to M. Petit Jean?" The noise of a key turned in a lock made the vicomte shudder. His father re-entered; his pallor had increased.

"I thought I heard some one lock the door of my cabinet, my father?" "Yes, I locked it." "You, my father? and why?" demanded Florestan, surprised. The comte placed himself so that his son could not descend the private stairs which led to the "rez-de-chaussée."

Florestan, alarmed, began to remark the sinister look of his father, and followed all his movements with anxiety. Without being able to explain it, he felt alarmed. "My father, what is the matter?"

"This morning, on seeing me, your sole thought has been this: My father will not have his name dishonoured; he will pay, if I can manage to make him believe in my assumed repentance."

"Ah! can you think that—"

"Do not interrupt me. I have been your dupe; you have neither shame, nor regret, nor remorse: you are rotten to the heart; you have never had an honest sentiment; you have not robbed as long as you had enough to satisfy your caprices; that is what is called probity by rich people of your stamp; then followed want of decency, then baseness, then crime, forgery. This is only the first period of your life—it is beautiful and pure compared to that which awaits you."

"If I did not change my conduct, I acknowledged it; but I will change, my father. I have sworn it to you." "You would not change."

"But—" "You would not change! Driven from the society to which you have been accustomed, you would soon become criminal, like the wretches with whom you would associate; a robber inevitably, and, if necessary, an assassin. There is your future life."

"Assassin! I?"

"Yes, because you are a coward!"

"I have fought duels, and I have proved—"

"I tell you that you are a coward! You have preferred infamy to death! A day will come when you will prefer the impunity of your new crimes to the life of others. That cannot be; I arrive in time to save henceforth, at least, my name from public dishonour. It must be finished."

"How, my father—finished! what do you mean to say?" cried Florestan, more and more alarmed at the expression of his father and his increasing paleness.

Suddenly some one knocked violently at the door of the cabinet; Florestan made a movement, as if to open it, but his father seized him with an iron hand, and withheld him.

"Who knocks?" demanded the comte.

"In the name of the law, open, open!" said a voice.

"This forgery was not, then, the last?" said the comte, in a low voice, looking at his son with a terrible scowl. "Yes, my father, I swear it," answered Florestan, trying in vain to release himself from the hold of his father.

"In the name of the law, open!" repeated the voice.

"What do you want?" demanded the comte.

"I am a commissary of police; I come to make a search on account of a robbery of diamonds, of which M. de Saint Rémy is accused. M. Baudoin, jeweller, has the proofs. If you do

not open, monsieur, I shall be obliged to break in the door."

"A robber already! I was not deceived," said the comte, in a low tone. "I came to kill you—I have delayed too long." "To kill me!"

"My name is enough dishonoured! let us finish: I have two pistols here—you are going to blow out your brains, otherwise I will do it for you, and I will say you killed yourself to escape shame."

And the comte, with frightful sang-froid, drew from his pocket a pistol, and with his disengaged hand he gave it to his son, saying,

"Come! proceed, if you are not a coward!"

After new and fruitless efforts to escape from the hands of the comte, his son fell backward, overcome with fright and pale with horror. From the terrible and inexorable looks of his father, he saw there was no pity to expect from him.

"My father!" he cried.

"You must die!" "I repent!"

"It is too late! Do you hear? they will break down the door!" "I will expiate my faults!" "They are going to enter! I must then, kill you!"

"Pardon?"

"The door will give way! You will have it so!" And the comte placed the barrel of the pistol against the breast of his son. The vicomte saw that he was lost. He took a sudden and desperate resolution; no longer struggling with his father, he said, with firmness and resignation, "You are right, my father; give me this pistol. There is infamy enough attached to my name; the life that awaits me is frightful, it is not worth contending for. Give me the pistol. You shall see if I am a coward." And he extended his hand. "But, at least, a word, one single word of consolation, of pity, of farewell," said Florestan. His trembling lips, his ashy paleness, evinced the emotion of his trying situation. "If this should be my son!" thought the comte, hesitating to give him the instrument. "If this is my son, I ought still less to hesitate at this sacrifice." The door of the cabinet was broken in with a tremendous crash.

"My father—they come—oh! I feel now that death is a benefaction. Thanks, thanks! but at least your hand, and pardon me!"

Notwithstanding his firmness, the comte could not prevent a shudder, and said, in a broken voice, "I pardon you."

"My father, the door opens—go to them—do not let them suspect you at least. And then, if they enter here, they will prevent me from finishing. Adieu."

The footsteps of several persons were heard in the adjoining apartment.

Florestan pointed the pistol to his heart.

It was discharged at the moment when the comte, to escape this horrible scene, had turned away, and rushed out of the room, the curtains closing after him.

At the noise of the explosion, at the sight of the comte, pale and trembling, the commissary stopped suddenly at the threshold of the door, making a sign for his officers not to advance.

Informed by Badinot that the vicomte was closeted with his father, the magistrate at once comprehended everything, and respected his great sorrows.

"Dead!" cried the comte, concealing his face in his hands; "dead!" repeated he, overwhelmed. "It was right—better death than infamy—but it is frightful!"

"Monsieur," said the magistrate, sadly, after a few moments' silence, "spare yourself a sorrowful spectacle; leave this house. Now there remains for me a duty to perform, still more painful than that which brought me here."

"You are right, monsieur," said M. de Saint Rémy. "As to the victim of the robbery, you can tell him to call at M. Dupont's, banker."

"Rue de Richelieu. He is well known," answered the magistrate.

"At what amount are the stolen diamonds estimated?"

"At about 30,000 francs, monsieur; the person who bought them, and through whom the robbery was discovered, gave that amount for them to your son."

"I can yet pay this, monsieur. Let the jeweller call the day after to-morrow on my banker; I will settle with him."

The commissary bowed, and the comte departed. As soon as he was gone, the magistrate, profoundly touched at this unexpected scene, turned towards the saloon, the curtains of which were down. He raised them with emotion.

"Nobody!" cried he, astonished, looking round the room, and not seeing the least trace of the tragic event which was supposed to have occurred.

Then, remarking the small door in the tapestry, he ran thither. It was locked on the other side. "A trick," cried he in a rage; "he has undoubtedly made his escape in this way."

And, in fact, the vicomte, before his father, pointed the pistol at his heart, but he had afterwards very dexterously discharged it under his arm, and immediately fled.

Notwithstanding the most active researches in all parts of the house, he was not to be found.

During the conversation between his father and the commissary, he had rapidly gained the boudoir, thence the conservatory, the back street, and finally reached the Champs Elysées.

This is a sad picture of degradation in the higher classes. We know it.

But, for want of instruction, the rich have, also, fatally, their wants, their vices, their crimes.

Nothing is more common, and more lamentable, than the insensate prodigalities that we have just described, and which always bring in their train, ruin, turpitude, infamy, or shame.

It is a deplorable, fatal spectacle. Doubtless inheritance, property, are, and ought to be, inviolably sacred.

For a long time yet, the frightful disproportion will exist that we have seen between the millionaire Saint Rémy, and the artisan Morel.

But from the very reason that these disproportions are sanctioned and protected by the laws, those who possess so much wealth ought morally to account to those who only possess probity, resignation, courage, and desire to work.

In the eyes of reason, of *human rights*, and even of social interests well understood, a large fortune should be an hereditary deposit, confided to prudent, firm, skilful, and generous hands, who, intrusted with the care of this fortune, and also of its disbursements, should know how to encourage, animate, ameliorate the condition of all those who come within its sphere.

It is thus sometimes, but the cases are rare.

How many young men, like Saint Rémy, masters, at twenty, of a considerable patrimony,

madly dissipate in idleness, in "ennui," in vice, for the want of knowing how to employ this wealth better, both for themselves and others!

How many, alarmed at the instability of human affairs, hoard up in a miserly manner!

Finally, those who, knowing that a stationary fortune becomes less, give themselves up, either as dupes or knaves, to this immoral, hazardous stock-jobbing, which the laws encourage and protect.

How can it be otherwise?

This science, this instruction, these rudiments of *individual economy*, and, consequently, social, who teaches them to inexperienced youth?

No one.

The rich man is thrown in the midst of society with his riches, as the poor with his poverty.

No more care is taken of the superabundance of the one, than of the wants of the other.

And is it not possible to accomplish this grand and noble task?

If, taking pity on the miseries, the ever-increasing sorrows of patient industry, restraining an opposition fatal to all, attacking, in fine, the impending question of the organization of labour, one should set the example himself of the *association of capital and industry*.

But, of an honest, intelligent, equitable association, which would secure the well-being of the artisan without destroying the fortune of the rich, and which, establishing between these two classes ties of affection and gratitude, would be a safeguard forever of the tranquillity of a state.

How powerful would be the consequences of such practical instruction!

Among the rich, who should hesitate, then, Between the improper and disastrous chances of stock-jobbing;

The wretched enjoyments of avarice;

The vain follies of a ruinous dissipation;

Or an investment, at once productive and beneficent, which would spread ease, morality, happiness, joy, among twenty families?

PART VII.

CHAPTER I.

THE ADIEUX.

THE morning after these last-mentioned events, a touching scene took place at Saint Lazare, at the hour of the recreation of the prisoners.

On this day, during the promenade of her companions, Fleur de Marie was seated on a bench near the basin, already called the *bench of La Goualeuse*. By a sort of tacit agreement, the prisoners abandoned this place, which she loved, for the sweet influence of the young girl had much increased. The Goualeuse preferred this seat near the basin, because the moss which grew around the border of the reservoir recalled to her mind the verdure of the fields, and even the limpid water with which it was filled made her think of the little river of the village of Bouqueval.

To the sad gaze of a prisoner, a tuft of grass is a meadow, a flower is a garden.

Confiding in the kind promises of Madame d'Harville, Fleur de Marie had been expecting for two days to leave Saint Lazare. Although she had no reason for inquietude at the delay,

the young girl, from her habitual misfortunes, hardly dared to hope soon for freedom.

Since her return among these creatures, whose appearance and language awakened at each moment the incurable recollection of her first shame, the sadness of Fleur de Marie had much increased, had become still more overwhelming. This was not all. A new subject of trouble, sorrow, and almost of alarm for her, grew out of the affectionate warmth of her gratitude towards Rodolphe. Strange thing! she only sounded the depth of the abyss where she had been plunged, to measure the distance which separated her from this man, whose grandeur appeared to her superhuman; from this man, whose kindness was so august, whose power was so formidable to the wicked.

Notwithstanding the respect with which her admiration was stamped, sometimes, alas! Fleur de Marie feared she recognised in this admiration the character of love; but of a love as concealed as profound, as chaste as concealed, as desponding as chaste.

The unfortunate had not made this grievous discovery until after her interview with Madame d'Harville.

Naturally, from the expectation of so soon seeing her friends at Bouqueval and Rodolphe, Fleur de Marie should have been transported with joy.

It was not so. Her heart beat sadly; her thoughts returned without ceasing to the words, the lofty looks of Madame d'Harville, when the poor prisoner had spoken with so much enthusiasm of her benefactor.

With singular intuition, the Goualeuse had thus discovered a part of the secret of Madame d'Harville.

"The warmth of my gratitude for M. Rodolphe has wounded this young lady, so handsome and of a rank so elevated," thought Fleur de Marie. "Now I comprehend the bitterness of her words! she expresses a disdainful jealousy!"

"She! jealous of me! it must be, then, that she loves him, and that I love him—also him! My love must have betrayed itself in spite of me!"

"To love him—I—a creature forever ruined! ungrateful, and wretch that I am! Oh! if that were so, rather death a hundred times."

Let us hasten to say, the unhappy child, who seemed doomed to every kind of martyrdom, exaggerated what she called *her love*. To her profound gratitude towards Rodolphe was joined an involuntary admiration of the grace, strength, and beauty which distinguished him above all; nothing less material, nothing more pure than this admiration, but it existed lively and powerful, because physical beauty is always attractive.

And then, besides, the voice of blood, so often denied, mute, unknown, or disowned, sometimes makes itself heard; these bursts of passionate tenderness, which drew Fleur de Marie towards Rodolphe, and at which she was alarmed, because in her ignorance she misconstrued their tendency, resulted from mysterious sympathies as evident, but also as inexplicable as the resemblance of features. In a word, Fleur de Marie, learning that she was the daughter of Rodolphe, could have at once accounted for her

feelings towards him; then, completely enlightened, she could admire without any scruple the beauty of her father.

Thus is explained the dejectedness of Fleur de Marie, although she expected from one moment to another to leave Saint Lazare.

Fleur de Marie, melancholy and pensive, was then seated on a bench near the basin, regarding with a kind of mechanical interest the gambols of two daring birds that came to sport on the curb-stone. She ceased for a moment to work on a little child's frock which she was hemming. Is it necessary to say that this belonged to the new *layette* so generously offered to Mont Saint Jean by the prisoners, thanks to the touching intervention of Fleur de Marie?

The poor and deformed protégée of La Goualeuse was seated at her feet; quite busy in making a little cap, from time to time she cast on her benefactress a look at once grateful, timid, and devoted—the look of a dog to his master.

The beauty, the charms, the adorable sweetness of Fleur de Marie, inspired this degraded woman with as much affection as respect.

There is always something holy and grand even in the aspirations of a heart debased, which, for the first time, opens itself to gratitude; and, until then, no one had caused Mont Saint Jean to experience the religious ardour of a sentiment so new to her. At the end of a few moments, Fleur de Marie shuddered slightly, wiped away a tear, and resumed her sewing.

"You will not, then, take a little rest during the recreation, my angel saviour?" said Mount Saint Jean to La Goualeuse.

"As I have given no money to buy the *layette*, I must finish my proportion in work," answered the young girl. "Your part, mon bon Dieu! why, without you, instead of this fine white linen, this warm fustian, to clothe my child, I should only have had those rags, which were trampled in the mud. I am very grateful towards my companions; they have been very kind to me, it is true; but you! oh, you! How, then, shall I explain myself?" added the poor creature, hesitatingly, and very much embarrassed to express her thoughts. "Hold!" resumed she; "there is the sun, is it not? there is the sun!"

"Yes, Mont Saint Jean, come, I listen," answered Fleur de Marie, inclining her enchanting face towards the hideous visage of her companion.

"Mon Dieu! you will laugh at me," answered she, sadly; "I want to speak, and I don't know how."

"Say on, Mont Saint Jean."

"Have you not the eyes of an angel!" said the prisoner, looking at Fleur de Marie in a kind of ecstasy; "they encourage me—your beautiful eyes. Come, I will try to say what I wish. There is the sun, is it not? It is very warm, it makes our prison gay, it is pleasant to see and feel, is it not?" "Without doubt."

"Well, let us suppose—this sun—did not make itself, and if one is grateful to it, so much the more reason—"

"To be grateful towards Him who created it, is it not so, Mont Saint Jean! You are right; thus, you should pray to Him, adore Him—it is God."

"That's it, there's my idea," cried the prisoner, joyfully; "that's it; I ought to be grateful to my companions, but I ought to pray to you, adore you, La Goualeuse, for it is you who have rendered them good to me, instead of being wicked, as they were."

"It is God whom you must thank, Mont Saint Jean, and not me."

"Oh! yes—you, you—I see you—you have done me good, both by yourself and others."

"But, if I am good, as you say, Mont Saint Jean, it is God who has made me so: it is, then, he whom you must thank." "Ah! marry—perhaps so, then, since you say so," answered the prisoner; "if it pleases you to have it so, very well."

"Yes, my poor Mont Saint Jean, pray to Him often. This will be the best way of proving to me that you love me a little." "If I love you! La Goualeuse, mon Dieu! mon Dieu! But, do you not recollect what you told the others, to prevent them from beating me? 'It is not her alone you beat, it is also her child.' Well! for the same reason, I do not love you for myself alone, but also for my child."

"Thank you, thank you, Mont Saint Jean; you give me pleasure to hear you say that."

And Fleur de Marie, much affected, extended her hand to her companion. "What a pretty little fairy's hand! how white and small it is!" said she, drawing back, as if she feared to touch it with her own coarse and red hands. However, after a moment's hesitation, she touched with her lips the ends of the fairy fingers which Fleur de Marie presented to her; then, falling on her knees abruptly, she looked at her fixedly, in a profound and solemn manner.

"But, come, then, and sit there—near me," said La Goualeuse. "Oh! as for that, no, never—never." "Why not?" "Respect discipline," as my brave Mont Saint Jean used to say; "soldiers together, officers together, each one with his fellow."

"You are crazy; there is no difference between us."

"No difference! mon bon Dieu! And you say that, when I see you as I see you, handsome as a queen; oh! stop—what is it to you—leave me here, on my knees—let me look at you, as I did just now. Marry—who knows, my child may resemble you."

Here, from a feeling of almost incredible delicacy in a creature of her species, fearing she might have wounded or humiliated Fleur de Marie by this singular wish, she added, sadly,

"No, no; I did but joke, La Goualeuse. I did not permit myself to look at you with this idea, unless you should allow it. My child shall be as ugly as myself—what of that? I shall not love it the less; poor little thing, it did not ask to be born, as they say. And if it lives, what will become of it?" said she, in a gloomy manner. "Alas! yes, what will become of it! mon Dieu!" The Goualeuse shuddered at these words. And, in effect, what would become of this poor, miserable, degraded, and despised child? What a fate! what a future! "Do not think of that, Mont Saint Jean," answered Fleur de Marie; "hope that your child will find some charitable persons on its path."

"Oh! one has never two chances, do you see, La Goualeuse," said Mont Saint Jean, bit-

terly, shaking her head. "I have met you—you—it is already a great chance—and, stop, let it be said without offence, I would have preferred that my child should have had this happiness instead of me. This wish is all that I can give it."

"Pray, pray God will assist you."

"Come, I will pray, if it please you, La Goualeuse; perhaps it will bring me good fortune: in fact, who would have told me, when La Louve beat me and I was the scapegoat of every one, that a good little angel would be there, who, with her pretty soft voice, would be stronger than any one, than La Louve, who is so strong and wicked?" "Yes; but La Louve has been very good to you, when she reflected that you were doubly to be pitied." "Oh! that is true, thanks to you, and I shall never forget it. But, tell me, La Goualeuse, why has she, since the other day, asked to have her room changed; she, who, in spite of her anger, seemed to like you?"

"She is a little capricious."

"It is dull: a woman who came here this morning from the ward where she now is, says she is quite changed."

"How is that?" "Instead of quarrelling with every one, she is very sad, and remains by herself; if any one speaks to her, she turns her back and does not answer. To see her silent who was always making a noise, it is astonishing, is it not? And then this woman told me something; but as for that, I don't believe it."

"What is that?" "She says she saw her weep: it is impossible."

"Poor Louve! it is on my account that she wished to change her quarters. I offended her without meaning it," said La Goualeuse, sighing.

"You offend any one, my good angel saviour!"

At this moment, Madame Armand, the inspectress, entered the court. After having sought for Fleur de Marie with her eyes, she came to her with a satisfied and smiling air.

"Good news, my child!"

"What do you say, madame?" cried La Goualeuse, rising. "Your friends have not forgotten you; they have obtained your liberty. The director has just received the notice."

"Can it be possible, madame! ah! what happiness, mon Dieu!" And the emotion of Fleur de Marie was so violent, that she turned pale, put her hand to her heart, which beat violently, and fell back on her seat. "Calm yourself, my child," said Madame Armand, kindly: "happily, such shocks are without danger." "Ah! madame, how grateful I ought to be!"

"It is, doubtless, Madame d'Harville who has obtained your liberty. There is an old lady here who is charged to conduct you to your friends. Wait for me; I will return for you; I have a few words to say in the work-room." It would be difficult to describe the expression of deep grief which spread over the features of Mont Saint Jean on learning that her good angel saviour was to leave Saint Lazare.

The grief of this woman was caused less by the fear of a renewal of her torments, than by the sorrow of parting from the sole being who had ever evinced any interest for her. Still

seated at the foot of the bench, she took hold of the two tufts of tangled hair, which escaped from under her old black cap, as if to tear them out; then, this violent affliction giving way to dejection, she let her head fall, and remained dumb and immovable, with her face buried in her hands.

Notwithstanding her joy at leaving the prison, Fleur de Marie could not prevent a shudder at the remembrance of La Chouette and the Maître d'Ecole; recollecting that these two monsters had made her swear not to inform her benefactors of her sad fate.

But these sad thoughts were soon dispelled at the hope of seeing Bouqueval, Madame Georges, and Rodolphe again; to the latter, she wished to recommend La Louve and Martial; it even seemed to her that the sentiment which she reproached herself for having felt towards her benefactor, being no longer nourished by sorrow and by solitude, would be calmed and modified as soon as she should resume the rustic occupations which she loved so much to partake with the good and honest inhabitants of the farm.

Astonished at the silence of her companion, of which she did not suspect the cause, she touched her slightly on the shoulder, and said,

"Mont Saint Jean, since I am now free, can I be of any service to you?"

On feeling the hand of La Goualeuse, the prisoner shuddered, let her arms fall, and turned towards the young girl, her face streaming with tears.

"Mon Dieu! what is the matter?" said La Goualeuse; "how you weep!"

"You are going away!" murmured she, in a voice almost suffocated with sobs; "I never thought that you might leave this place from one moment to another, and that I should never see you again—never more."

"I assure you that I will often, always remember your friendship, Mont Saint Jean."

"Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! and to think that I already love you so much! When I was seated there on the ground at your feet, it seemed to me I was saved; that I had nothing more to fear. It is not on account of the blows I may receive again, that I say this. I have a hard life. But it seemed to me that you were my guardian angel, and that you had pity on me. It is true, when one is used to being ill-treated, one is more sensible of a kindness." Then bursting again into tears, she cried, "Come, it is finished—it is finished—true. This must have happened some day or other; my folly has been never to think of it. It is finished; nothing more—nothing more."

"Come, take courage; I will think of you, and you shall remember me." "Oh! as for that, they might cut me to pieces, rather than make me deny or forget you; I shall become old—old as the streets, but I shall always have before my eyes your angel face. The first word that I shall teach my child will be your name, La Goualeuse, for without you it would have died with cold."

"Listen to me, Mont Saint Jean," said Fleur de Marie, touched at the affection of this poor creature. "I can promise you nothing for yourself, although I know some very charitable people; but for your child, it is different; it is in-

nocent of every evil; he, and the persons of whom I speak, would, perhaps, take the charge of it when you can part with it." "Part from it—never, oh! never!" cried Mont Saint Jean, with warmth. "What would become of me then, now that I have parted on him?"

"But how will you support it! son or daughter, it must be honest, and for that—"

"It must eat honest bread, is it not so, La Goualeuse? I think so; it is my ambition. I say it to myself every day, thus: on leaving here I shall not let the grass grow under my feet. I will become a '*chiffonnière*,' a '*balayuse des rues*,'* but I'll be correct; one owes that, if not to one's self, at least to one's children, when one has the honour of having any," said she, with a kind of pride.

"And who will take care of your child while you work?" answered La Goualeuse; "would it not be better, if that is possible, as I hope it is, to place it in the country with some good people, who would make it a good farmer's girl, or a plough-boy? You can come from time to time to see it, and some day, perhaps, you would find the means to remain altogether—in the country it costs so little to live!"

"But to part with it, to part with it! All my joy is in it. I, who have no one to love me."

"You must think more for it than for yourself, my poor Mont Saint Jean; in two or three days I will write to Madame Armand, and if she demand I mean to make in favour of your child succeeds, you will never have occasion to say again, what you said just now, *Alas, mon Dieu! what will become of it?*"

The inspectress, Madame Armand, interrupted this conversation; she came to seek Fleur de Marie.

After having again burst into sobs, and bathing, with the tears of despair, the hands of the young girl, Mont Saint Jean fell back on the bench quite overcome with sorrow, not even thinking of the promise just made to her by Fleur de Marie.

"Poor creature!" said Madame Armand, leaving the yard, followed by La Goualeuse, "poor creature, her gratitude towards you gives me a better opinion of her."

On learning that Fleur de Marie was pardoned, the other prisoners, instead of being jealous, expressed their joy; some of them surrounded her, and bade her farewell in a cordial manner, congratulating her frankly on her quick deliverance from prison.

"All the same," said one of them; "this little *blondinette* has made us do some good; it was when we collected for the *Jayette* of Mont Saint Jean. This will be remembered at Saint Lazare."

When Fleur de Marie had left the prison buildings under the conduct of the inspectress, the latter said to her, "Now, my child, go to the wardrobe, where you will leave your prison garments, and resume the peasant's costume, which, from its rustic simplicity, becomes you so well; adieu. You go to be happy, for you go under the protection of worthy people, and you leave this house never to return. But—hold—I am not reasonable," said Madame Armand, whose eyes were bathed in tears; "it is

* A rag-picker, a street-sweeper.

impossible for me to conceal from you how much I am already attached to you, poor child!" Then, seeing Fleur de Marie much affected, she added, "You do not wish me thus to sadden your departure?"

"Ah! madame, is it not to your recommendation that this young lady, to whom I owe my liberty, interested herself in my fate?" "Yes, and I am happy at what I have done; my presentiments have not deceived me." At this moment a bell rang. "Ah! this is the signal for them to resume their work; I must go in. Adieu! once more adieu, my dear child!"

And Madame Armand, quite as much affected as Fleur de Marie, embraced her tenderly; she then said to one of the attendants, "Conduct mademoiselle to the wardrobe."

A quarter of an hour afterward, Fleur de Marie, clothed as a peasant, as we have seen her at the farm of Bouqueval, entered the office, where Madame Séraphin awaited her. This woman, housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand, came to take the unfortunate child to the island of the ravageur.

CHAPTER II.

SOUVENIRS.

JACQUES FERRAND had easily and promptly obtained the liberty of Fleur de Marie.

Instructed by La Chouette of the sojourn of La Goualeuse at Saint Lazare, he had immediately addressed himself to one of his clients, an honourable and influential man, telling him that a young girl, led astray, but sincerely repentant, and recently confined at Saint Lazare, ran the risk, from contact with the other prisoners, of having her good resolutions weakened. This young girl had been strongly recommended to him by some respectable people, who would take charge of her as soon as she left the prison. Jacques Ferrand had added, he begged his all-powerful client, in the name of morality, of religion, and of the future rehabilitation of this unfortunate, to solicit her discharge. Finally, the notary, so as to completely conceal his part in the transaction, had particularly requested his client not to name him in the accomplishment of this good work; this wish, attributed to the philanthropic modesty of Jacques Ferrand, was scrupulously observed; the release of Fleur de Marie was demanded and obtained solely in the name of the client, who, as soon as it was received, sent it to Jacques Ferrand, that he might address it to the protectors of the young girl.

Madame Séraphin, on giving this order to the directors of the prison, added that she was charged to conduct La Goualeuse to her friends. From the excellent account given by the inspectress to Madame d'Harville, no one doubted that she owed her freedom to the intervention of the marquise. Thus the notary's housekeeper could in no way excite the suspicions of her victim.

Madame Séraphin had, as occasion required, as is commonly said, the air of a good woman; it required very close observation to remark something insidious, false, and cruel in her crafty look, her hypocritical smile.

In spite of her profound wickedness, which

had made her the accomplice or confidant of her master's crimes, Madame Séraphin could not help being struck with the touching beauty of this young girl, delivered by herself when quite a child to La Chouette, and whom she was then about to conduct to certain death.

"Well, my dear demoiselle," said she, in honeyed tones, "you must be delighted to get out of prison."

"Oh! yes, madame; and, doubtless, I owe my deliverance to the protection of Madame d'Harville, who has been so kind to me!" "You are not mistaken. But come, we are rather late, and we have got a long road to travel."

"We are going to the farm of Bouqueval, to Madame Georges, is it not so, madame?" cried La Goualeuse.

"Yes, certainly, we are going to the country—to Madame Georges," said the housekeeper, to drive away every suspicion from the mind of Fleur de Marie; then she added, with malicious good-nature, "But this is not all; before you see Madame Georges a little surprise awaits you: come, come, our hack is below. What delight you must feel at leaving this place, dear demoiselle. Come, let us go. Your servant, messieurs." And Madame Séraphin, after having exchanged salutations with the "*greffier*" and his clerk, descended with La Goualeuse, followed by an officer to open the doors. The last one was closed on the two females, and they found themselves under the large porch which faces on the Rue du Faubourg Saint Denis, when they met a young girl who was coming, doubtless, to visit a prisoner. It was Rigolette. Rigolette is always neat and coquettish. A little plain cap, very clean, and trimmed with cherry-coloured ribands, which harmonized wonderfully with her jet-black hair, surrounded her pretty face; a very white collar was turned over her long brown "*tartan*." She carried on her arm a straw basket, and, thanks to her neat and graceful manner of walking, her thick-soled "*brodequins*" were of marvellous cleanliness, although she came, alas! very far, poor child.

"Rigolette!" cried Fleur de Marie, at once recognising her former companion in prison, and of her rural excursions.

"La Goualeuse!" exclaimed the grisette in her turn. And the two young girls threw themselves into each other's arms. Nothing could be more enchanting than the contrast between these two young creatures of sixteen tenderly embracing, both so charming, and yet so different in expression and beauty. The one blonde, with large, blue, melancholy eyes, and a profile of angelic pureness; the other a lively brunette, with round and rosy cheeks, pretty black eyes, a charming picture of youth and gayety, a rare and touching example of happiness in indigence, of virtue in destitution, and of joy in industry.

After an exchange of their mutual caresses, the two young girls looked at each other. Rigolette was joyful at the encounter, Fleur de Marie confused.

The sight of her friend recalled to her mind the few days of calm enjoyment which had preceded her first degradation. "It is you—what happiness!" said the grisette. "Mon Dieu!

yes; what a delightful surprise! it is so long since we have seen one another!" answered La Goualeuse.

"Ah! now I am no longer astonished at not having met you for six months," remarked Rigolette, observing the rustic clothes of La Goualeuse; "you live in the country?" "Yes, for some time," said Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes. "And you come, like me, to see some one in prison?" "Yes—I come—I come to see some one," answered Fleur de Marie, stammering and blushing with shame. "And you are returning home, far from Paris, without doubt? Dear little Goualeuse, always good, I recognise you there. Do you remember the poor woman to whom you gave your mattress, linen, and the small amount of money you had, which we were about to spend in the country? for then you were crazy after the country, you, mademoiselle village girl." "And you, you did not like it much, Rigolette. How kind you were, for it was on my account you went."

"And for mine also; for you, who were always a little serious, you became so contented, so gay, so lively, once in the midst of the fields or woods; if it were only to see you there, it was pleasure to me. But let me look at you again! How this little round cap becomes you! how pretty you look! Decidedly, it was your vocation to wear a peasant's cap, as it was mine to wear the grisette's. Now you are according to your wishes, you must be happy; it does not surprise me. When I did not see you any more, I said to myself, this good little Goualeuse is not made for Paris; she is a real flower of the forest, as the song says, and these flowers cannot live in the capital: the air is not good enough for them. Thus La Goualeuse has got a place with some good people in the country; this is what you have done, is it not?"

"Yes," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Only I have a reproach to make you."

"To me?" "You should have advised me; one does not leave in this way from one day to another, or, at least, without sending some word."

"I—I left Paris so quick," said Fleur de Marie, more and more confused, "that I could not." "Oh! I did not wish it; I am too happy to see you again. In truth, you did right to leave Paris, it is so difficult to live here quietly, without reckoning that a poor girl, isolated as we are, might turn to evil without wishing it. When one has nobody to advise with, one has so few means of defence; the men make such fine promises, and then, marry, sometimes poverty is so hard. Hold! do you remember the little Julie, who was so pretty! and Rosine, the blonde with black eyes?"

"Yes, I recollect them."

"Well! my poor Goualeuse, they have both been deceived, then abandoned, and, finally, from misfortune to misfortune, they have fallen to be the wretched women such as are shut up here."

"Ah! mon Dieu!" cried Fleur de Marie, who held down her head and became purple with shame.

Rigolette, deceived as to the sense of the exclamation of her friend, resumed: "They are culpable, despicable even, if you wish, I grant this; but, look here, my good Goualeuse,

because we have had the happiness to remain virtuous—you, because you have gone to live in the country, I, because I had no time to lose with lovers; that I preferred my birds to them, and all my pleasure was to have a nice little room—we must not be too severe upon others. Mon Dieu! who knows but that deceit, poverty, and circumstances, may not have had a great deal to do with the bad conduct of Rosine and Julie, and if in their place we should not have done as they have done!"

"Oh!" said Fleur de Marie, bitterly, "I do not accuse them; I pity them." "Come, come, we are in a hurry, my dear demoiselle," said Madame Séraphin, offering her arm to her victim impatiently.

"Madame, let us have a few moments' more; it is so long a time since I have seen my poor Goualeuse," said Rigolette. "It is very late, mesdemoiselles, already three o'clock, and we have a long way to go," answered Madame Séraphin, very much annoyed at this meeting; but she added, "I will give you ten minutes longer."

"And you," said Fleur de Marie, taking the hands of her friend in her own; "you have such a happy disposition! Are you always gay! always contented?"

"I was, until a few days past, contented and joyous; but now—" "You have sorrows?"

"I! ah! yes, you know me, a real *Roger Bon Temps*. I am not changed, but, unfortunately, everybody is not like me; and as others have their troubles, that causes me to have some." "Always kind!"

"What would you have? Now just imagine I came here for a poor girl—a neighbour—a very lamb of the bon Dieu, who is accused wrongfully, and who is much to be pitied; she is called Louise Morel; she is the daughter of an honest workman who has become crazy from his misfortunes."

At the name of Louise Morel, one of the victims of the notary, Madame Séraphin shuddered and looked at Rigolette attentively. The face of the grisette was absolutely unknown to her; nevertheless, from that moment she paid great attention to the conversation of the young girls.

"Poor thing," replied the Goualeuse, "how happy she must be that you do not forget her in her trouble!"

"This is not all—it is a fatality; just as you see me, I come a great distance—and still from another prison—but a prison for men." "You?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! yes, I have there another very sad subject. Thus you see my basket" (and she showed it) "is divided in two: each one has a side; to-day I bring Louise a little linen, and just now I carried something to poor Germain; my prisoner is called Germain. Hold! I cannot think of what has just passed between us without having a desire to weep; it is foolish—I know it is of no use, but, indeed, it is my nature."

"And why do you feel like weeping?"

"Only think that Germain is so unfortunate as to be associated with all the prison rogues; it quite overcomes him; he has a taste for nothing, eats nothing, and is growing thinner every day. I saw that, and I said to myself, 'He is not hungry; I will make him a nice little dainty bit, which he liked so much when he was my neighbour; that will give him an appetite.' When

"I say a dainty bit, just understand me, it was just some fine yellow potatoes, mashed up with a little milk and sugar; I filled a pretty cup with it, and just now I took it to him in prison, telling him that I had prepared this myself, just as I used to do in our happy days—you understand; I thought, perhaps, I could thus induce him to eat; ah, truly—" "How?" "That caused him to weep, when he saw the cup in which I had so often taken my milk before him; he burst into tears; and, more than the bargain, I finished by doing as he did, although I tried all I could to prevent it; you see my luck. I thought I was doing good—consoling him, and I made him more sad than before." "Yes, but those tears must have been so sweet to him."

"All the same; I should have preferred to console him differently; but I speak of him without telling you who he is; he was an old neighbour of mine, the most honest lad in the world, as gentle and simid as a young girl, and whom I loved as a comrade, as a brother."

"Oh! then, I can imagine that his sorrows are yours."

"Is it not so! But you will see what a good heart he has. When I left him, I asked him, as I always do, for his commissions, saying to him, with a laugh, just to raise his spirits a little, that I was his little housekeeper, and that I should be very exact, very active, to keep his custom. Then he, trying to smile, asked me to bring him one of the romances of Walter Scott, which he used to read to me in the evenings when I worked. This romance is called 'Ivan—Ivanhoe;' yes, that is the name. I liked this book so much, that he read it to me twice. Poor Germain! he was so obliging!" "It is a souvenir of the happy days gone by that he wished to have." "Certainly; since he begged me to go to the same library, not to hire, but to buy the volumes we used to read together—yes, to buy them—and you may judge it is a sacrifice for him, for he is as poor as we are."

"Excellent heart!" said the Goualeuse, quite affected.

"There! you are as much moved as I was, when he gave me this commission, my good little Goualeuse; but, you comprehend, the more I felt a desire to weep, the more I tried to laugh; for to weep twice in a visit made expressly to enliven him, was too much. Thus, to drive this gloom away, I recalled to his mind the droll story of a Jew, one of the characters of this romance, which formerly had so much amused us. But the more I talked, the more he looked at me with the big, big tears in his eyes. Marry, it touched my heart. I had restrained my tears for a quarter of an hour; I ended by doing as he did. When I left him he was sobbing; and I said to myself, furious at my stupidity, 'If this is the way I cheer and console him, it is hardly worth while to go and see him; I, who promised myself to make him laugh! It is astonishing how I have succeeded!'"

At the name of François Germain, Madame Séraphin redoubled her attention.

"And what has this young man done to be in prison?" asked Fleur de Marie.

"He!" cried Rigolette, whose compassion gave place to indignation; "he is persecuted

by an old monster of a notary, who is also the denouncer of Louise."

"Of Louise, whom you came here to see?"

"The same. She was the servant of the notary, and Germain was his cashier. It would be too long a story to tell you of what they unjustly accuse this poor boy. But what is quite sure is, that this bad man is much *enragé* with these two unfortunates, who have never injured him. But patience—patience; every one his turn."

Rigolette pronounced these last words with an expression which made Madame Séraphin uneasy. Engaging in the conversation, instead of remaining quiet, she said to Fleur de Marie, in a wheedling manner, "My dear demoiselle, it is late; we must go; we are waited for. I can well comprehend what mademoiselle says interests you, for I, who do not know this young girl and this young man, am much affected. Mon Dieu! is it possible people can be so wicked! And what is the name of this bad notary of whom you speak, mademoiselle?"

Rigolette had no reason to be suspicious of Madame Séraphin; nevertheless, remembering the recommendations of Rodolphe, who had enjoined on her the greatest reserve on the subject of the secret protection which he granted to Germain and Louise, she regretted she had suffered herself to say, "Patience—every one his turn." "This bad man is called M. Ferrand, madame," answered Rigolette; adding, very adroitly, to repair her slight indiscretion, "And it is so much the more wicked in him to persecute Louise and Germain thus, as they have no one to interest themselves in their behalf except me, who can be of no use to them."

"What a pity!" said Madame Séraphin. "I had hoped the contrary when you said '*But patience*.' I thought that you reckoned on some protector to sustain these two unfortunates against this wicked notary."

"Alas! no, madame," answered Rigolette, in order to completely lull the suspicions of Madame Séraphin. "Who would be generous enough to take the part of these two poor young folks against a rich and powerful young man like M. Ferrand?" "Oh, there are hearts generous enough for that!" cried Fleur de Marie, after a moment's reflection, and with constrained warmth.

"Yes. I know some one who makes it a duty to protect those who suffer, and defend them; for he of whom I speak is as charitable to honest people as he is formidable to the wicked." Rigolette looked at the Goualeuse with astonishment, and was on the point of saying (thinking of Rodolphe) that she also knew some one who courageously took the part of the weak against the strong; but, always faithful to the requests of her neighbour, she answered Fleur de Marie, "Really! you know some one generous enough to come to the aid of the poor?"

"Yes. And although I have already implored his pity, his benevolence for other persons, I am sure if he knew the unmerited misfortunes of Louise and M. Germain, he would save them and punish their persecutor; for his justice and goodness are as inexhaustible as those of God."

Madame Séraphin looked at her victim with surprise. "This little girl would be still more

"dangerous than we thought?" said she to herself. "If I had taken pity on her, what she has just said would render the accident inevitable which will rid us of her."

"My good little Goualeuse, since you have such a good acquaintance, I beg you will recommend my Louise and my Germain to him, for they do not deserve their fate," said Rigolette, thinking that her friends might gain by having two defenders instead of one.

"Be tranquil; I promise you to do what I can for your protégées with M. Rodolphe," said Fleur de Marie.

"M. Rodolphe!" cried Rigolette, strangely surprised.

"Certainly," said La Goualeuse.

"M. Rodolphe! a travelling clerk?"

"I do not know what he is. But why this astonishment?"

"Because I know a Monsieur Rodolphe also."

"Perhaps it is not the same."

"Let us see, yours—how is he?"

"Young!"

"Exactly."

"A face full of nobleness and goodness."

"That's it! but, mon Dieu! just like mine," said Rigolette, more and more surprised; and she added, "Is he dark? Has he small mustaches?"

"Yes."

"Is he tall and slender, fine figure, and an air comme il faut, for a travelling clerk? Does yours look just so?"

"Without a doubt, it is he," answered Fleur de Marie; "only, what is strange is, that you think him a travelling clerk."

"As to that, I am sure of it; he told me so."

"You know him?" "I know him! he is my neighbour." "M. Rodolphe?"

"He has a chamber on the fourth floor, alongside of mine." "He! he!"

"What is so astonishing in all this! it is very simple: he only earns fifteen or eighteen hundred francs a year; he can only hire a modest room, although he has very little regularity about him, for he does not know what his clothes cost him, my dear."

"No, no; it is not the same," said Fleur de Marie, reflecting. "Ah ça! yours, then, is a phoenix for order!" "He of whom I speak, do you see, Rigolette," said Fleur de Marie, with enthusiasm, "is all-powerful; his name is only pronounced with love and veneration; his appearance is imposing, and one is almost tempted to kneel before his grandeur and his goodness." "Then I am at fault, my poor Goualeuse; I say as you do, it is not the same; for mine is neither all-powerful nor imposing. He is a *très bon enfant*, very lively, and no one kneels before him—just the contrary; for he has promised to help me wax my floor, and take me a walk on Sunday. You see he is no great lord. But what am I thinking about? I have truly the heart for a walk! And Louise and my poor Germain! as long as they are in prison, there can be no pleasure for me."

For some moments Fleur de Marie reflected profoundly: she recalled to her mind that when she first saw Rodolphe at the *tapis-franc*, he had the appearance and language of the guests of the Ogresse. Might he not play the part of a travelling clerk with Rigolette? What could be the object of this new transformation? The

grisette, seeing the pensive air of Fleur de Marie, said,

"There is no use of cracking your head on this account, my good Goualeuse, we shall soon find out if we know the same M. Rodolphe; when you see yours, speak to him of me; when I see mine, I will speak to him of you. In this way we can satisfy ourselves at once." "And where do you live, Rigolette?"

"Rue du Temple, No. 17."

"Now this is strange, and worth remembering," said Madame Séraphin to herself, having attentively listened to this conversation. "This M. Rodolphe, mysterious and all-powerful personage, who doubtless makes himself pass for a clerk, occupies a room adjoining that of this little *ouvrière*, who knows more than she chooses to say. Good, good; if the grisette and the pretended clerk meddle with what does not concern them, we know where to find them."

"When I have spoken to M. Rodolphe I will write you," said La Goualeuse; "and I will give you my address, so that you can answer; but repeat your address, I fear I shall forget it."

"Here, I have one of my cards that I leave at my customers';" and she gave Fleur de Marie a little card, on which was written, in magnificent italics, *Mademoiselle Rigolette, Dress-maker, Rue du Temple, 17*. "It is just as if it were printed, is it not?" added the grisette. "It was poor Germain who wrote them for me—he was so kind, so thoughtful. Now, look you, it seems as if it were done purposely; one would say I never found out his good qualities until he was unfortunate, and now I am always reproaching myself for having put off so long loving him."

"You love him, then?"

"Ah! mon Dieu! yes. I must have a pretext to go and see him in prison. Confess that I am a strange girl!" said Rigolette, stifling a sigh, and laughing through her tears, as the poets say.

"You are as good and generous as ever," said Fleur de Marie, pressing tenderly the hands of her friend.

Madame Séraphin had doubtless heard enough of the conversation of the young girl, for she said, almost roughly, to Fleur de Marie, "Come, come, my dear demoiselle, let us go; it is late; here is a quarter of an hour lost."

"What a surly look this old woman has! I don't like her face," whispered Rigolette to Fleur de Marie. Then she added, aloud, "When you come to Paris, my good Goualeuse, do not forget me; your visit will give me so much pleasure! I shall be so happy to pass a day with you, to show you my housekeeping, my room, my birds! I have birds—it is my luxury."

"I will try to come and see you, but I will certainly write. Come, adieu, Rigolette, adieu. If you knew how happy I am to have met you!"

"And I, then!—but this shall not be the last time, I hope; and then I am so impatient to know if your M. Rodolphe is the same as mine. Write me soon on this subject, I entreat you."

"Yes, yes. Adieu, Rigolette."

"Adieu, my good little Goualeuse;" and the two young girls embraced each other tenderly, concealing their emotion. Rigolette entered the prison to see Louise, and Fleur de Marie got into a hack with Madame Séraphin, who

ordered the coachman to go to Batignolles, and to stop at the *barrière*.

A cross-road led from this place almost in a straight line to the banks of the Seine, not far from the island of the Ravageur. Fleur de Marie being unacquainted with Paris, did not perceive that the carriage was driven on a different road from that to Saint Denis. It was only when the vehicle stopped at Batignolles that she said to Madame Séraphin, who invited her to get out, "But it seems to me, madame, that this is not the road to Bouqueval; and then, how can we go from hence to the farm on foot?"

"All I can say to you, my dear demoiselle," answered the housekeeper, "is, that I execute the orders of your benefactors, and that you would cause them much trouble if you hesitate to follow me."

"Oh! madame, do not think it," cried Fleur de Marie; "you are sent by them—I have no questions to ask—I follow you blindly; only tell me if Madame Georges is well."

"She is perfectly so."

"And—M. Rodolphe?"

"Perfectly well also."

"You know him, then, madame; but just now, when I spoke of him with Rigolette, you said nothing."

"Because I must say nothing—I have my orders."

"Did he give them to you?"

"Isn't she curious, the dear demoiselle, isn't she curious?" said the housekeeper, laughing.

"You are right; pardon my questions, madame. Since we go on foot to the place to which you conduct me," added Fleur de Marie, sweetly, "I shall know that which I so much desire to know."

"In fact, my dear demoiselle, before a quarter of an hour we shall have arrived."

The housekeeper having left behind her the last houses of Batignolles, followed, with Fleur de Marie, a grassy footpath. The day was calm and beautiful, the sky towards the west half concealed by red and purple clouds; the sun, beginning to decline, cast his oblique rays on the heights of Colombe, on the other side of the Seine. As Fleur de Marie drew near the banks of the river, her pale cheeks became slightly coloured; she inhaled with delight the sharp, pure air of the country. Her beautiful face expressed a satisfaction so calm and holy, that Madame Séraphin said to her, "You seem well contented, my dear demoiselle?" "Oh! yes, madame; I am going to see Madame Georges, perhaps M. Rodolphe. I have some poor creatures very unfortunate to recommend to them. I hope they will assist them. Why should I not be content? If I were sad, should not my sadness disappear? And, then, look! the sky is so gay with its rosy clouds! and the grass! how green it is, notwithstanding the consoling and there—there—behind those willow-see the river—how large it is! mon Dieu! laugh! it shines on it—it is dazzling—what golden!"

"At this in the little basin in the prison. God Séraphin not forget the prisoners. He gives them 'so their ray of the sun,'" added Fleur de Marie, with a kind of pious gratitude; then, led by the remembrance of her captivity, the better to appreciate the happiness of being free, she

cried, in a burst of artless joy, "Ah! madame! and there in the middle of the river, do you see this pretty little island covered with willows and poplars, with the white house on the shore! how charming this habitation must be in summer, when all the trees are covered with leaves! What repose, what refreshing air must be found there!"

"Ma foi," said Madame Séraphin, with a strange smile, "I am delighted that you find the island pretty."

"Why, madame?" "Because we are going there." "To this island?" "Yes: does it surprise you?" "A little, madame." "And if you should find your friends there?" "What do you say?" "Your friends collected there, to celebrate your deliverance from prison? would you not be more agreeably surprised?" "Can it be possible! Madame Georges! M. Rodolphe?"

"Look here, my dear demoiselle, I have no more command over myself than a child. With your innocent looks, you make me say what I ought not to say." "I am going to see them! Oh! madame, now my heart beats!"

"Don't go so fast! I can imagine your impatience, but I can hardly follow you, little madcap." "Pardon, madame, I am in such haste to arrive." "It is very natural. I do not reproach you for it—quite the contrary." "The road is steep here, and bad; will you take my arm, madame?"

"It is not to be refused, my dear demoiselle, for you are active and young, and I am old."

"Lean well on me, madame; do not be afraid to fatigue me."

"Thank you, my dear demoiselle, your aid is very acceptable, this descent is so steep. Ah! now we are on a good road."

"Ah! madame, it is then true, I go to see Madame Georges! I cannot believe it."

"Yet a little patience—in fifteen minutes you will see her, and then you will believe!"

"What I cannot comprehend," added Fleur de Marie, thoughtfully, "is, that Madame Georges awaits me there, instead of at the farm."

"Always so curious, the dear demoiselle—always so curious!" "How indiscreet I am, madame!" said Fleur de Marie, smiling.

"Thus, to punish you, I have a mind to tell you of a surprise that your friends intend for you."

"A surprise! for me, madame?"

"Hold, leave me alone, little spy—you will make me speak in spite of myself."

We will leave Madame Séraphin and her victim on the road which led to the river.

We will precede them both for some moments to the island of the *Ravageur*.

CHAPTER III.

THE BOAT.

At night, the appearance of the island inhabited by the Martial family was gloomy, but in the brilliant light of the sun, nothing could be more charming and cheerful than this cursed dwelling-place.

Bordered by willows and poplars, and almost entirely covered with thick grass, intersected

with winding paths of yellow gravel, the island contained a small vegetable garden and a number of fruit-trees. In this orchard was situated the thatched roof dwelling where Martial had wished to retire with François and Amandine. From this place the island terminated at its point by a kind of stockade, formed of large piles, to prevent the washing away of the earth.

Before the house was an arbour of green trelliswork reaching quite to the landing-place, destined to support during the summer the hop-vine and *vigne vierge*, under whose shade were arranged the seats and tables of the guests.

At one of the extremities of the main building, painted white and covered with tiles, a woodhouse, surmounted by a granary, formed a sort of wing, much lower than the principal edifice. Immediately over this wing was a window with shutters covered with plates of iron, and fastened exteriorly by two bars of the same material.

Three boats were lying at the landing-place, and at the bottom of one of them Nicolas was trying how the *souape* worked which he had arranged.

Mounted on a bench outside of the arbour, Calebasse, with her eyes shaded by her hand, was looking in the direction where she expected Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie to appear.

"No one yet, neither old nor young," said Calebasse, descending from her bench, and addressing Nicolas: "it will be as yesterday! We shall have waited for the King of * * * * If these women don't come before a half hour, we must go; the affair at Bras-Rouge is better worth our while; he is waiting for us. The broker is to be at his house in the Champs Elysées at five o'clock—we must be there before him. This very morning La Chouette repeated it to us."

"You are right," answered Nicolas, leaving his boat. "May the thunder crush this old woman, who physics us for no purpose! The *souape* works like a charm—of the two jobs perhaps we shall have neither."

"Besides, Bras-Rouge and Barbillion have need of us—of themselves they can do nothing."

"It is true; for, while one does the business, Bras-Rouge must remain outside his tavern to watch, and Barbillion is not strong enough to drag the broker into the cellar alone; she'll kick, this old woman."

"Did not La Chouette tell us, laughingly, that she kept the *Maitre d'Ecole* as a *boarder* in this cellar?"

"Not in this one; in another which is much deeper, and inundated when the river is high."

"Mustn't he vegetate there, in that cellar! To be there all alone, and blind!"

"He will see clear there, if he sees nowhere else: the cellar is as dark as a furnace."

"All the same; when he has sung all the songs he knows to amuse himself, the time must appear devilishly long to him."

"La Chouette says that he amuses himself in hunting rats, and that this cellar is very full of game."

"I say, Nicolas, speaking of individuals who must be rather wearied, fatigued," said Calebasse, with a ferocious smile, pointing with her finger to the window just described, "there is one there who must be sucking his own blood."

"Bah! he is asleep. Since this morning he has made no noise; and his dog is silent."

"Perhaps he has strangled it for food; for these two days past they must have been almost mad with hunger up there."

"It is their business. Martial may endure all this as long as he pleases, if it amuses him; when he has finished, they will say that he died from a severe illness; there will be no difficulty." "You think so?" "Most surely. On going this morning to Asnières, mother met the Père Férot, the fisherman; as he expressed his surprise at not having seen his friend Martial for two days, she told him that Martial did not leave his bed he was so ill, and his life was despaired of. The père swallowed all that just like honey; he will tell it to others—and when the affair happens it will seem all natural."

"Yes, but he will not die at once; it takes a long time in this way."

"What would you have? there is no other way to manage it. This madman of a Martial, when he has a mind, is as wicked as the devil, and as strong as a bull in the bargain; had he suspected us, we could not have approached him without danger; while with his door once well nailed up on the outside, what can he do? His window was already ironed."

"Hold! he could loosen the bars by breaking away the plaster with his knife, which he would have done, if, mounted on a ladder, I had not mangled his hands with the hatchet every time he commenced his work!"

"What a duty!" said the brigand, chuckling; "how much you must have been amused!"

"I had to give you time to arrive with the iron plate and bars which you went to Père Micou's for."

"How he must have foamed! Dear brother!"

"He ground his teeth like a madman; two or three times he tried to push me off with blows from his club, but then, having but one hand free, he could not work at the grating."

"Fortunately, there is no fireplace in the room!"

"Yes, and the door is strong and his hands wounded! but for this he would be capable of making a hole through the plank."

"No, no, there is no danger that he can escape. His bier is more solid than if it were made of oak and lead."

"I say—and when La Louve gets out of prison, and come here to seek her man, as she calls him?"

"Well! we will tell her to look for him!"

"Apropos, do you know that if mother had not shut up these scamps of children, they would have been capable of gnawing the door like rats, to deliver Martial! This little scoundrel François is a real devil since he suspects that we have shut up our big brother."

"Ah, ça! but are you going to leave them in the room up stairs while we are away from the island? Their window is not grated—they have only to descend from the outside."

At this moment cries and sobs in the house attracted the attention of Nicolas and Calebasse. They saw the opened door of the ground-floor shut violently; a moment after the pale and sinister face of the widow appeared at the kitchen window. With her long, bony

arm she beckoned her children to come to the house.

"Come, there is a squabble! I bet it is François who kicks," said Nicolas. "Scoundrel of a Martial! except for him this *gamin* would have been all alone. Watch well, and if you see the two females coming, call me."

While Calebasse, remounted on the bench, awaited their approach, Nicolas entered the house. The little Amandine, kneeling in the middle of the kitchen, wept, and asked pardon for her brother François. He, irritated and threatening, stood in one of the corners of the room, brandishing the hatchet of Nicolas. He seemed this time to make a desperate resistance to the wishes of his mother.

As usual, quiet and calm, she pointed to the half-open door leading to the cellar, and made a sign to her son that she wished François shut up there.

"I will not go there!" cried the determined child, whose eyes sparkled like those of a wild-cat; "you wish to let us die with hunger, like our brother Martial."

"Mamma, for the love of God, leave us up stairs in our own room, as you did yesterday," asked the little girl, in a supplicating tone, clasping her hands; "in the dark cellar we will be so much afraid!"

The widow looked at Nicolas in an impatient manner, as if to reproach him for not having executed her orders, and she again pointed to François.

Seeing his brother approach, the young boy brandished his hatchet in a desperate manner, and cried, "If you want to shut me up there, whether it is my brother, my mother, or Calebasse, so much the worse—I strike, and the hatchet cuts!"

Both Nicolas and the widow felt the necessity of preventing the two children from going to the assistance of Martial during their absence, and also to conceal from them what was about to take place on the river. But Nicolas, as cowardly as he was ferocious, and not caring to receive a blow from the dangerous hatchet with which his brother was armed, hesitated to approach him.

The widow, vexed at the hesitation of her eldest son, pushed him roughly by the shoulder towards François.

But Nicolas, again drawing back, cried,

"If he wounds me, what shall I do, mother? You know well enough I am about to need the use of both my arms, and I still feel the blow that this *guez* of a Martial has given me."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with contempt, and made a step towards François.

"Do not come near me, mother!" cried the enraged boy, "or you shall be paid for all the blows you have given to me and Amandine."

"My brother, rather let yourself be locked up. Oh! mon Dieu! do not strike our mother!" cried Amandine, terrified.

At this moment Nicolas saw on a chair a large woollen coverlet, which was used for the ironing-table; he seized it, and adroitly threw it over the head of François, who, in spite of all his efforts, finding himself entangled in its thick folds, could make no use of his arms. Then Nicolas threw himself upon him, and, with the aid of his mother, carried him into the

cellar. Amandine had remained kneeling in the middle of the kitchen. As soon as she saw the fate of her brother, she arose quickly, and, notwithstanding her alarm, went of her own accord to join him in his gloomy prison. The door was double locked on the brother and sister.

"It is the fault of this *guez* of a Martial, if these children are, like devils, unchained against us," cried Nicolas. "Nothing has been heard in his chamber since this morning," said the widow, in a thoughtful manner, and she shuddered; "nothing." "That proves, mother, that you did well to say what you did to the Père Férot, the fisherman of Asnières, that Martial was sick in bed, and like to die. In this way, when all is over, no one will be astonished."

After a moment's pause, and as if she had wished to escape a horrible thought, the widow said, roughly, "Did La Chouette come here while I was at Asnières?" "Yes, mother." "Why did she not remain and go with us to Bras-Rouge? I am suspicious of her." "Bah! you suspect everybody, mother: to-day it is La Chouette; yesterday it was Bras-Rouge." "Bras-Rouge is at liberty; my son is at Tom-lon: they both committed the same robbery." "You always repeat this old story. Bras-Rouge escaped because he is as cunning as a steel-trap, that's all. La Chouette did not remain here, because she had an appointment at two o'clock, near the *Observatoire*, with the tall man in black, on whose account she carried off this girl from the country, with the assistance of the Maître d'Ecole and Tortillard; and it was even Barbillion who drove the hack which this tall man in black hired for the occasion. Come, now, mother, why should La Chouette inform against us, since she tells us what jobs she has in hand, and we do not tell her ours? for she knows nothing of our proposed drowning scrape. Be tranquil, mother—wolves don't eat one another. The day's work will be a good one. When I think that the broker has often twenty, thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds in her bag, and that in two hours time we shall have her in the cellars of Bras-Rouge! Thirty thousand francs in diamonds! only think of it!"

"And while we hold the broker, Bras-Rouge remains outside!" said the widow, with an air of suspicion. "And where should he be! If any one should come in, must he not answer, and prevent them from approaching the place where we are doing our job?"

"Nicolas! Nicolas!" cried Calebasse, from without, "here are the two women."

"Quick, quick, mother! your shawl! I will row you over—it will be so much done," said Nicolas.

The widow had replaced her mourning-cap with one of black tulle. She wrapped herself in a large tartan shawl of white and gray, locked the door of the kitchen, placed the key behind one of the shutters of the "*rez-de-chaussée*," and followed her son to the landing-place.

Almost in spite of herself, before she left the island, she cast a long, lingering look at Martial's window, knit her brows, bit her lips, then, after a sudden fit of shivering, she murmured to herself, "It is his own fault—own fault."

"Nicolas! do you see them? there, just by that rising ground; there is a *payenne* and a *bourgeoise*," cried Calebasse, pointing to the other side of the river, where Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie appeared, descending a small path leading to the shore, near a small elevation, on which was placed a plaster-kiln. "Let us wait for the signal, and have no bungling," said Nicolas.

"Are you blind? Don't you recognise the fat woman who came here the day before yesterday? Look at her orange shawl, and see what a hurry the little peasant girl is in! poor little puss—it is plain to see she don't know what is coming."

"Yes, I see the fat woman now. Come, *'ça chauffe'*, it looks like work. *'Ah ça!'* let us make our plans, Calebasse," said Nicolas. "I will take the old woman and the young girl in my boat with the *'souple'*: you will follow in the other, close behind; and be sure to row in such a manner that I can jump into your boat as soon as I set the trap at work, and mine will sink."

"Don't be afraid; it is not the first time that I have rowed, is it?" "I am not afraid of being drowned myself—you know I can swim—but, if I do not jump just at the right moment in the other boat, the females, in their struggles, may catch hold of me—and, thank you, I have no desire to drink water with them."

"The old woman is making a sign with her handkerchief," said Calebasse: "there they are on the shore."

"Come, come, step on board, mother," cried Nicolas, unfastening the boat: "come in the boat with the *'souple'*, so that the two women will not suspect anything. And you, Calebasse, jump into the other one, my girl—row strong. Ah! hold, take my hook, put it alongside of you—it is pointed like a lance—it may be of use—now, push ahead!" said the bandit, placing in the boat a long boat-hook, one end of which terminated with a sharp spike of iron.

In a few moments the two boats touched the shore, where Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie had been waiting impatiently.

While Nicolas was tying his boat to a post, Madame Séraphin approached him, and whispered, hurriedly, "Say that Madame Georges awaits us;" then she said, in a loud tone, "We are a little behindhand, mon garçon." "Yes, my good lady; Madame Georges has asked for you several times."

"You see, my dear demoiselle, Madame Georges is waiting for us," said Madame Séraphin, turning towards Fleur de Marie, who, notwithstanding her confidence, had felt her heart beat at the appearance of the sinister faces of the widow, Calebasse, and Nicolas. But the name of Madame Georges reassured her, and she answered, "I am also very impatient to see Madame Georges; happily, the passage is short."

"Won't the dear lady be happy!" said Madame Séraphin. Then, turning towards Nicolas, she added, "Come, *'mon garçon'*, bring your boat a little nearer, that we can embark;" and, in a low tone, she whispered, "The little one must be drowned; if she comes up, put her under again."

"It is said; and you, don't be afraid; when

I make a sign give me your hand. She will sink all alone—all is prepared—you have nothing to fear," answered Nicolas, in a low tone. Then, with savage imperturbability, without being touched either with the beauty or youth of Fleur de Marie, he offered her his arm.

The young girl leaned lightly on him, and entered the boat. "Now your turn, my good lady," said Nicolas to Madame Séraphin. And he offered to assist her.

Whether it was a presentiment, suspicion, or only a fear that she could not jump quick enough from the boat where La Goualeuse and Nicolas were seated when it should sink, the housekeeper of Jacques Ferrand said to Nicolas, drawing back,

"On second thoughts, I will go in the boat of mademoiselle." And she took a seat alongside of Calebasse. "Very good," said Nicolas, exchanging a glance with his sister; and, with the end of his oar, he shoved off his boat, his sister doing the same as soon as Madame Séraphin had taken her seat. Standing on the shore, erect, immovable, indifferent to this scene, the widow, pensive and absorbed, kept her eyes fixed on Martial's window, which could be distinguished, through the poplar trees, from the shore.

During this time the two boats moved slowly off towards the opposite side.

CHAPTER IV.

BONHEUR DE SE REVOIR.

BEFORE we acquaint the reader with the "dénouement" of the drama which passed in the boats, we will go back a little. A few moments after Fleur de Marie had left Saint Lazare with Madame Séraphin, La Louve had also quitted the prison.

Thanks to the recommendations of Madame Armand and of the director, who wished to recompense her for her good action towards Mont Saint Jean, she had been also pardoned and dismissed.

A complete change had taken place in this creature, heretofore so headstrong, vile, and corrupted.

Keeping constantly in mind the description made by Fleur de Marie of a peaceful and solitary life, La Louve held in honour her past crimes.

To retire to the depths of the forests with Martial, such was her only ambition, her fixed idea, against which all her ancient and bad instincts had in vain revolted. Separated from La Goualeuse (from whose growing influence she had fled), this strange woman had retired to another quarter of the prison.

To cause this rapid and sincere conversion (more assured, and consolidated by the fruitless struggles of the perverse habits of her companions), Fleur de Marie, following the impulse of her native good sense, had thus reasoned. La Louve, a violent and resolute creature, loves Martial passionately; she must, then, with joy hail a possibility of leaving the ignominious life of which she is ashamed for the first time, and of dedicating herself entirely to this rough man, whose every desire is hers—to this man, who seeks solitude as much from taste as to escape

the reprobation which pursues his detestable family.

Aided solely by these elements, Fleur de Marie, in giving a praiseworthy direction to the savage love and bold character of this creature, had then changed an abandoned girl into an honest woman. For only to dream of marrying Martial and retiring with him to the woods, to live there a life of labour and privation, is it not absolutely the wish of a virtuous woman?

Confiding in the aid which Fleur de Marie had promised her in the name of her unknown benefactor, La Louve determined to make this laudable proposition to her lover, not without the bitter fear of a refusal, for the Goualeuse, in leading her to blush for the past, had also given her a consciousness of her position towards Martial.

Once free, La Louve only thought of seeing him. She had received no news from him for many days. In the hope of meeting him at the island of the Ravageur, and decided to wait there if she did not find him, she got into a cabriolet, and was rapidly driven to the bridge of Asnières, which she crossed about fifteen minutes before Madame Séraphin and Fleur de Marie, coming on foot from the barrière, had arrived on the shore near the plaster-kiln.

When Martial did not come to take La Louve in his boat to the island, she forthwith applied to an old fisherman named the Père Férot, who lived near the bridge.

At four o'clock in the afternoon, a cabriolet stopped at the entrance of a little street of the village of Asnières. La Louve gave five francs to the coachman, jumped to the ground, and ran hastily to the abode of the Père Férot.

Having thrown off her prison dress, she wore a robe of dark green merino, a red shawl, imitation "cachemire," and a lace cap trimmed with ribands; her thick, crispy hair was scarcely smoothed. In her impatience to see Martial, she had dressed herself with more haste than care.

On reaching the house of the fisherman, she found him seated at the door mending his nets.

As soon as she saw him, she cried out, "Your boat, Père Férot—quick, quick!"

"Ah! is it you, mademoiselle? Good-day, good-day. You have not been here for a long time."

"Yes, but your boat—quick—to the island."

"Ah, well! fate will have it so: my good girl, it is impossible to-day."

"How?"

"My boy has taken my boat to go with the others to a rowing match at Saint Ouen. There is not a single boat left on the whole shore from this to the docks."

"Mordieu!" cried La Louve, stamping and clinching her fists: "it happens so, expressly for me!"

"It's true! on my word! I am very sorry I cannot convey you to the island, for, without doubt, he must be worse."

"Worse! Who?"

"Martial." "Martial!" cried La Louve, seizing the Père Férot by the collar: "Is Martial sick?"

"Did you not know it?"

"Martial!"

"Yes, certainly; but you will tear my blouse; do be quiet."

"He is sick! And since when?"

"Since two or three days."

"It is false! he would have written to me."

"Ah, well, yes! he is too sick to write!"

"Too sick to write! And he is on the island! you are sure of it?"

"I will tell you. Imagine that this morning I met the widow Martial—ordinarily, when I see her on one side, you understand, I generally cross to the other; for I don't like her company—then—"

"But my Martial—where is he?"

"Stop a moment. Finding myself face to face with his mother, I did not dare to avoid her; she looks so wicked, that I am afraid of her—she is stronger than I am: 'Here is two days now that I have not seen your Martial,' said I to her; has he gone to the city?" Thereupon she looked at me with her two eyes—but such eyes—they would have killed me, had they been pistols, as they say."

"I suffocate; what next—what next?" The Père Férot was silent for a moment, then said, "Hold! you are a good girl—promise to be secret, and I will tell you everything as I know it."

"About Martial?"

"Yes; for do you see, Martial is a good fellow, although wrong-headed; and if anything should happen to him from his old she-devil of a mother, or his 'gueux' of a brother, it would be a pity."

"But what has happened? What have his mother and brother done to him? Where is he, hein! Speak! why don't you speak?"

"Come, good; there you are again at my blouse! Let me go. If you interrupt me by destroying my clothes, I can never finish, and you will know nothing." "Oh! what patience!" cried La Louve, stamping her feet with rage.

"You will not tell any one what I am going to say?" "No, no, no!"

"Word of honour?" "Père Férot, you'll throw me into convulsions."

"Oh, what a girl! what a girl! Hasn't she a hot head! 'Voyous,' I'll go on. In the first place, you must know that Martial is more and more at loggerheads with his family, and if they should play him some bad trick, I should not be surprised. It is on this account that I am sorry my boat is not here, for if you count on those from the island, you are wrong. Neither Nicolas nor this hussey of a Calebasse will take you there."

"I know it well enough. But what did his mother say! Did he fall sick on the island?"

"Don't get me into a scrape; this is the story: this morning I said to the widow, 'For two days past I have not seen Martial; his boat is there. Is he in the city?' Thereupon the widow looked at me with her wicked eyes: '*He is sick on the island; and so sick that he will never come off again.*' I said to myself, 'How can that be! There are three days that—' Well! what?" said the Père Férot, interrupting himself: "Well! where are you going to!—where the devil is she running to now!"

Believing the life of Martial menaced by the inhabitants of the island, La Louve, overcome with alarm, and transported with rage, listened no longer to the fisherman, but ran along the Seine.

Some topographical details are indispensable to understand the following scene.

The island of the Ravageur approached nearer the left side of the river than the right shore, from whence Fleur de Marie and Madame Séraphin had embarked. La Louve was on the left side. Without being very steep, the hills on the island concealed in all its length the view of one shore from the other. Thus, La Louve had not seen the embarkation of La Goualeuse, and the Martial family, of course, could not see her as she ran along the shore on the opposite side.

We will recall to the minds of our readers that the country house belonging to Doctor Griffon, where the Comte de Saint Rémy temporarily dwelt, was built on the hill side, near the shore where La Louve was wandering, half distracted.

She passed, without seeing them, near two persons, who, struck with her haggard look, turned to follow her at a distance. These two persons were the Comte de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon.

The first movement of La Louve, on learning the peril of her lover, had been to run impetuously towards the place where she knew he was in danger. But as she approached the island, she thought of the difficulty of getting there. As the old fisherman had told her, she could not count on any strange boat, and no one from the Martial family would come for her.

Breathless, her face flushed, her eyes sparkling, she stopped opposite to a point of the island which, forming a curve at this place, was nearest to the mainland. Through the leafless branches of the willows and poplars, La Louve could see the roof of the house where, perhaps, Martial was dying. At this sight, uttering a fearful groan, she tore off her shawl, her cap, and slipping down her robe, keeping on her petticoat, she threw herself into the river, and waded until she lost her footing, when she began to swim vigorously towards the island.

It was a spectacle of savage energy.

At each stroke, the thick and long hair of La Louve, untied by the violence of her movements, shook about her head like a shaggy mane of copper colour.

Suddenly, from the other side of the island resounded a cry of distress, a cry of terrible, desperate agony. La Louve shuddered, and stopped short. Then sustaining herself on the water with one hand, with the other she pushed back her thick hair, and listened. A new cry was heard, but more feeble, more supplicating, convulsive, expiring—and all relapsed into a profound silence. "My Martial!" cried La Louve, swimming again with all her strength. She thought she had recognised the voice of Martial.

The comte and doctor had not been able to follow La Louve quick enough to prevent what she accomplished. They arrived opposite to the island at the moment that the two fearful screams were heard, and stopped, as much alarmed as La Louve. Seeing her struggle intrepidly against the current, they cried, "The poor thing will be drowned!" These fears were vain; she swam like an otter; still a few more strokes, and she reached the land. She was getting out of the water by the assist-

ance of the poles, which, as we have said, formed a kind of stockade at the end of the island, when she perceived the body of a young girl, dressed as a peasant, sustained by her clothes, floating down the current.

To grasp with one hand the poles, and with the other to seize hold of the girl by her dress, such was the movement of La Louve, a movement as rapid as thought. Then she drew her so violently towards her and within the stakes, that, for a moment, she disappeared under the water, which was of no great depth at this place.

Endued with no common strength and address, La Louve raised up La Goualeuse (for it was she), whom she had not yet recognised, took her up in her robust arms, as one would have taken a child, made some steps in the water, and, finally, laid her on the green bank of the island.

"Courage! courage!" cried M. de Saint Rémy to her, a witness, as well as Doctor Griffon, of this bold act. "We are going to cross the bridge, and will come to your aid in a boat." La Louve did not hear these words. Let us repeat, that from the right shore of the Seine, where Nicolas, Calebasse, and their mother remained after the consummation of their horrible crime, nothing could be seen of the other side, owing to the height of the island. Fleur de Marie, suddenly drawn within the stockade by La Louve, having plunged for a moment, and not reappearing to the sight of her murderers, they believed their victim drowned and ingulfed.

Some few moments afterward, the current brought down another body, in an eddy, which La Louve did not perceive. It was the corpse of the notary's housekeeper. Dead—quite dead—this one.

Nicolas and Calebasse had as much interest as Jacques Ferrand to get rid of this witness, this accomplice of their new crime; thus, when the boat with the soupape sunk with Fleur de Marie, Nicolas, springing into the boat of his sister, nearly upset it, and, seizing a favourable moment, threw the housekeeper into the river and despatched her with the boathook.

Out of breath and exhausted, La Louve, kneeling on the ground alongside of Fleur de Marie, recruited her strength, and examined the features of her whom she had rescued from death. Let her surprise be imagined when she recognised her companion of the prison; her companion, who had exercised upon her destiny an influence so rapid, so benevolent. In her surprise, for a moment she forgot Martial.

"La Goualeuse!" cried she.

And, with bended body, leaning on her hands and knees, her hair dishevelled, her clothes dripping with water, she contemplated the unhappy child, extended, almost expiring, on the ground. Pale, inanimate, her eyes half open and without expression, her beautiful flaxen hair falling flat over her forehead, her blue lips, her small hand, already stiff and icy—one would have thought her dead. "La Goualeuse!" repeated La Louve, "what chance! I who came to say to my Martial the good and evil she had done me with her words and promises; the resolution that I had taken. Poor little thing! I find her here, dead! But, no, no!" cried La Louve, approaching still

nearer to Fleur de Marie, and feeling an almost imperceptible breath escape from her mouth: "No! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! she breathes still! I have saved her from death! that has never happened to me before, to save any one. Ah! that, that does me good; it makes me warm. Yes, but my Martial—I must save him also. Perhaps, at this moment, he is expiring; his mother and brother are capable of killing him. Yet I cannot leave this poor little thing here. I will carry her to the widow's; she must take care of her, and show me Martial, or I will break everything—I will kill everybody! Oh! neither mother, brother, nor sister do I care for, when I know my Martial is there!"

And, immediately getting up, La Louve carried Fleur de Marie in her arms. With this light burden she ran towards the house, not doubting, but that the widow and her daughter, notwithstanding their wickedness, would lend their assistance to Fleur de Marie.

When she reached the highest part of the island, from whence could be seen both shores of the Seine, Nicolas, his mother, and Calebasse were far off; they were then going in all haste to the dwelling of Bras-Rouge.

At this moment also a man, who, concealed in the plaster-kiln, had invisibly assisted at this horrible tragedy, disappeared, believing, with the murderers, that the crime was executed.

This man was Jacques Ferrand.

One of Nicolas's boats was tied to a pile near the place where the Goualeuse and Madame Séraphin had embarked.

Hardly had Jacques Ferrand left the plaster-kiln to return to Paris, when M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon hastily passed the bridge of Asnières, running towards the island, thinking to reach it by Nicolas's boat, which they had seen from afar.

To her great surprise, on arriving at the house of the Ravageurs, La Louve found the door closed. Placing the still inanimate body of Fleur de Marie under the arbour, she drew near to the house. She knew the window of Martial's chamber. What was her surprise to see the shutters covered with iron plates, and fastened with bars of the same material!

Suspecting partly the truth, La Louve uttered a hoarse, resounding cry, and began to call with all her strength, "Martial! my friend!"

No one answered. Alarmed at this silence, La Louve began to walk around the building like a savage beast who scents his mate, and seeks, in roaring, the entrance of the den where he is confined.

From time to time she cried, "My man—are you there, my man?" And in her rage she shook the bars of the kitchen window—she knocked against the wall—she kicked against the door.

All at once a hollow sound answered from the interior of the house. La Louve shuddered—listened. The noise ceased.

"My man has heard me! I must enter, even if I have to gnaw the door with my teeth!" and again she uttered her savage cries.

Several blows, feebly struck on the iron of the window shutters of Martial's room, answered to her shouts.

"He is there!" cried she, stopping suddenly under the windows of her lover; "he is there!"

if necessary, I will tear off the iron shutters with my nails, but I will open these shutters!"

So saying, she saw a large ladder placed behind one of the blinds of the lower rooms; in drawing this blind violently towards her, La Louve caused the key to fall which the widow had concealed on the window bench. "If it unlocks," said La Louve, trying the key in the lock, "I can go up to his chamber. It opens," cried she, with joy; "my friend is saved!"

Once in the kitchen, she was struck by the cries of the children, who, shut up in the cellar, and hearing an extraordinary noise, called for help.

The widow, believing that no one would come to the island or house during her absence, had contented herself with locking François and Amandine in the cellar, leaving the key in the lock.

Set at liberty by La Louve, the brother and sister rushed precipitately from the cellar, crying, "Oh, La Louve, save our brother Martial! they wish to make him die; during two days he has been walled up in his chamber."

"They have not wounded him!"

"No, no; we believe not."

"I arrive in time!" cried La Louve, rushing to the staircase; then suddenly stopping, she said, "And La Goualeuse! whom I forget. Amandine, some fire at once; you and your brother, bring here, near the chimneyplace, a poor girl who was drowning. I saved her. She is under the arbour. François, a pair of pincers, a hatchet, an iron bar, so that I can break down the door of my Martial!"

"Here is an axe to split wood, but it is too heavy for you," said the young boy.

"Too heavy!" cried La Louve, and she lifted with ease this mass of iron, which, under any other circumstances, she could hardly have raised from the ground. Then mounting the stairs four at a time, she repeated to the two children,

"Run and bring in the young girl, and place her near the fire." In two bounds, La Louve was at the bottom of the corridor, at Martial's door. "Courage, my friend—here is your Louve!" cried she, and raising the hammer with both hands, with a furious blow she shook the door.

"It is nailed on the outside." "Draw out the nails," cried Martial, in a feeble voice.

Throwing herself on her knees in the corridor, with the aid of the pincers and of her nails, which she wounded, and her fingers, which she tore, La Louve succeeded in drawing out the enormous nails which fastened the door.

At length the door was opened.

Martial, pale, his hands covered with blood, fell almost lifeless into the arms of La Louve.

CHAPTER V.

LA LOUVE AND MARTIAL.

"At length, I see you! I hold you! I have you!" cried La Louve, receiving Martial in her arms with an accent of joy and savage energy; then sustaining him, almost carrying him, she led him to a seat placed in the corridor.

During some moments, Martial remained

weak and feeble, endeavouring to recover from this violent shock, which had exhausted his failing strength. La Louve saved her lover at the moment when, in a state of despair, he felt himself about to die, less from the want of food than from the deprivation of air, impossible to be renewed in a small room without a chimney, without any aperture, and hermetically closed—through the atrocious foresight of Calebasse, who had stopped up with old linen even the smallest fissures of the door and window.

Palpitating with happiness and anguish, her eyes wet with tears, La Louve, on her knees, watched the smallest movements of Martial. By degrees, he seemed to recover, as he breathed the pure and salubrious air. After a slight shudder, he raised his weary head, uttered a long sigh, and opened his eyes.

"Martial, it is I! it is your Louve! how do you feel?" "Better," answered he, in a feeble voice.

"Mon Dieu! what will you have! water, vinegar?" "No, no," cried Martial, less and less oppressed. "Air! oh, some air! nothing but air!" La Louve, at the risk of cutting her hands, broke the glass of a window which she could not open without moving a heavy table. "Now I breathe! I breathe! my head is relieved!" said Martial, coming quite to himself. Then, as if for the first time recalling to mind the services she had rendered him, he cried, in a tone of ineffable gratitude, "Without you, I should have died, my good Louve." "Well, well; how are you now?" "Better and better." "Are you hungry?" "No, I am too weak. I suffered most from want of air; finally, I suffocated—I suffocated! it was frightful!" "And now?" "I live again! I come out from the tomb, and I come out—thanks to you!"

"But your hands, your poor hands! these wounds! Who did this, mon Dieu!"

"Nicolas and Calebasse, not daring to attack me openly a second time, shut me in my chamber, and left me to die with hunger. I tried to prevent them from nailing up my window—my sister cut my hands with the hatchet!"

"The monsters! they wished to have it believed that you were dead from some sickness; your mother had already spread the report that you were in a dying state. Your mother, my man, your mother!" "Hold! do not speak to me of her," said Martial, bitterly; then, for the first time remarking the wet clothes, and strange accoutrement of La Louve, he cried, "What has happened to you—your hair is streaming with water! You are without your dress."

"What matters it! In fine, you are saved, saved!" "But explain to me why you are wet." "I knew you were in danger—I could find no boat."

"And you swam here?"

"Yes. But your hands; let me kiss them. You suffer—the monsters! And I was not there!"

"Oh! my brave Louve," cried Martial, with enthusiasm: "brave among all brave creatures!"

"Did you not write there 'Death to cowards'?"

And La Louve showed her arm, where these words were written in indelible characters.

"Intrepid! Go: but you feel the cold; you tremble."

"It is not the cold."

"Never mind. Go in there; you will take the cloak of Calebasse—you will wrap yourself in it."

"But—" "I wish it."

In a second, La Louve was enveloped in a tartan cloak, and returned.

"For me, to run the risk of drowning!" repeated Martial, looking at her with pride.

"On the contrary. A poor girl was almost drowned. I saved her on reaching the island—"

"You saved her also—where is she?"

"Below, with the children; they are taking care of her." "And who is this young girl?"

"Mon Dieu! if you knew what a chance—what a happy chance! She is one of my companions of Saint Lazare—a very extraordinary girl—va."

"How is that?"

"Imagine that I loved her and hated her, because she at the same time planted both death and happiness in my heart." "She?"

"Yes; concerning you." "Me?"

"Listen, Martial." Then, interrupting herself, she added, "No, no. I shall never dare."

"What is it, then?" "I wished to ask something of you. I came to see you on this account: for when I left Paris, I did not know that you were in danger." "Well! speak."

"I dare not." "You dare not—after what you have just done for me?"

"Exactly; it would seem as if I asked a recompense." "Asked a recompense! And do I not owe you one! Did you not take care of me, night and day, in my sickness, last year?"

"Are you not my Martial?"

"Then, you should speak to me frankly, because I am your Martial, and will be always."

"Always, Martial?"

"Always! true as I am called Martial. For me, there shall be no other woman in the world but you, La Louve. No matter what you have been—so much the worse—it is my business. I love you—you love me; and I owe my life to you. But, since you have been in prison, I am no longer the same: much has happened. I have reflected; and you shall no more be what you have been." "What do you mean to say?" "I never wish to leave you again. Neither do I wish to leave François and Amandine."

"Your little brother and sister?"

"Yes; from this day I must be to them a father—you comprehend. This gives me duties to perform—that tames me. I am obliged to take charge of them. They wished to make finished brigands of them: to save them, I shall take them away." "Where?" "I don't know; but certainly far from Paris." "And I?" "You! I will take you also."

"Take me also?" cried La Louve, in a joyous delirium. She could not believe in so much happiness. "I shall not leave you!"

"No, my brave La Louve, never. You shall aid me to bring up these children. I know you. On saying to you, I wish that my poor little Amandine should be a virtuous girl, I know what you will be for her; a good mother."

"Oh! thank you, Martial, thank you!"

"We will live as honest work folks; be easy, we will find work; we will work like negroes. But, at least, these children shall not be *des gueux* like their father and mother. I shall not hear myself called any more the son and brother of a guillotine; in fine, I shall no more pass through streets where I am known. But what is the matter?"

"Martial, I am afraid I shall become crazy." "Crazy!" "Crazy with joy!" "Why?" "Because that, do you see, it is too much!" "What?" "What? you ask me. Oh, no! do you see, it is too much: because I have saved the Goualeuse, this has brought me this happiness; it must be so."

"But, once more, what is the matter?" "What you have just asked! Oh, Martial! Martial!" "Well?" "I came to ask you!" "To leave Paris?" "Yes," answered she, quickly; "to go with you in the woods, where we would have a nice little house, children whom I should love! oh! how I should love them! how your Louve would love the children of her Martial! or, rather, if you wished it," said La Louve, trembling, "I would call you my husband; for we shall not have the place unless you consent to this," she hastened to add, quickly.

Martial, in his turn, looked at La Louve with astonishment, not in the least understanding her words. "Of what place do you speak?" "A gamekeeper's." "That I shall have!" "Yes." "And who will give it to me?" "The protectors of the young girl whom I have saved." "They do not know me?" "But I have spoken of you, and she will recommend us to her protectors."

"And what did you say about me?" "What should I say?" "Good, Louve." "And, besides, you may conceive that, in prison, confidence is soon gained; and this young person was so handsome, so mild, that in spite of myself, I felt attracted towards her; I at once saw that she was none of us." "Who is she, then?"

"I didn't know; I can't understand anything; but in my life I have never seen, never heard anything like her; she is like a fairy to read what one has in the heart; when I told her how much I loved you, instantly, on that account, she became interested, not by using hard words, you know how I would have stood that, but in speaking to me of a very laborious, hard life, tranquilly passed with you, according to your taste, in the midst of the forest; only, according to her idea, instead of being a poacher, you were a gamekeeper, and I your wife; and then our children were to run to meet you when you returned at night from your rounds, with the dogs, your gun on your shoulder; and then we would sup at the door of the cabin, in the cool of the evening, under the large trees; and then we would retire to rest so happy, so peaceful. What shall I say? in spite of myself I listened; it was like a charm. If you knew—she spoke so well, so well—that—all that she said, I thought I could see; I dreamed wide awake!"

"Ah! yes! it would be a happy life," said Martial, sighing in his turn: "without being altogether rotten at heart, this poor François has associated too much with Calebasse and Nicolas; so that the good air of the woods will be much better for him than the air of the city.

Amandine could help you in the house; I would be a good keeper, as I was a famous poacher. I should have you for manager, my brave Louve, and then, as you say, with children, what should we need! When once one is accustomed to the forest, one is quite at home; a hundred years would pass as one day; but, see now, I am a fool. Hold, you should not have spoken to me of this life; it only causes regrets, that's all."

"I let you go on, because you say exactly what I did to La Goualeuse." "How!"

"Yes, in listening to these fairy tales, I said to her, 'What a pity, that these castles in the air, as you call them, La Goualeuse, are not the truth! Do you know what she answered, Martial?' said La Louve, her eyes sparkling with joy.

"No!" "Let Martial marry you, promise both of you to live an honest life, and this place, which causes you so much envy, I am almost sure to obtain for you on leaving the prison," was her answer. "A keeper's place for me!"

"Yes, for you."

"But you are right—it is a dream. If it only were needful that I should marry you to obtain this place, my brave Louve, it should be done to-morrow, if I had the means; for, from to-day, do you see, you are my wife—my true wife."

"Martial, I your real wife?"

"My real, my sole wife, and I wish you to call me your husband—it is just the same as if the mayor had joined us."

"Oh! La Goualeuse was right: it makes one so proud to say, 'My husband! Martial—you shall see your Louve keeping house, at work—you shall see.'"

"But this place—do you believe?"

"Poor little Goualeuse, if she deceives herself, it is for others; for she appeared to believe what she told me. Besides, just now, on leaving the prison, the inspectress told me that the protectors of La Goualeuse, people of high rank, had taken her from the prison this very day; that proves that she has benefactors, and that she can do what she has promised."

"Ah!" cried Marshal suddenly, rising from his seat, "I do not know what we are thinking about." "What is it?" "This young girl, she is below, dying, perhaps; and instead of helping her, we are here."

"Be satisfied, François and Amandine are with her; they would have called us if there had been any danger. But you are right: let us go to her; you must see her, she to whom, perhaps, we shall owe our happiness." And Martial, leaning on the arm of La Louve, descended the stairs.

Before they enter the kitchen, we will relate what passed since Fleur de Marie had been confided to the care of the children.

CHAPTER VI.

DOCTOR GRIFFON.

FRANÇOIS and Amandine had just carried Fleur de Marie into the kitchen near the fire, when M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon, who had crossed over in Nicolas's boat, entered

the house. While the children stirred up the fire and threw on some dry fagots, which, soon kindling, gave out a cheerful blaze, Doctor Griffon exercised all his skill to restore the young girl.

"The poor child is hardly seventeen!" cried the comte, profoundly affected; then turning towards the doctor, he said, "Well! what do you think, my friend?"

"I can hardly feel the pulse; but, what is very singular, the skin of the face is not coloured blue in this subject, as is ordinarily the case in asphyxia from submersion," answered the doctor with imperturbable sang froid, looking at Fleur de Marie with an air profoundly meditative.

Doctor Griffon was a tall, thin man, very pale, and completely bald, except two very scanty tufts of black hair, most carefully gathered from behind, and laid flat on his forehead; his face, wrinkled and furrowed by hard study, expressed at once intelligence, reflection, and coldness.

Of immense knowledge, of consummate experience, a skilful and renowned practitioner, principal physician of a civil hospital (where we shall find him by and by), Doctor Griffon had but one defect—that of making, if we may so express it, a complete oversight of the patient, and only attending to the disease: young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, no matter; he thought only of the medical fact, more or less curious or interesting in a scientific point of view, which the subject offered.

For him there only existed subjects.

"What a charming face! how handsome she is, notwithstanding this frightful palor!" said M. de Saint-Rémy, contemplating Fleur de Marie with sadness.

"Have you ever seen, my dear doctor, features more regular or more lovely? And so young—so young." "The age is nothing," said the physician, roughly: "no more than the presence of water in the lungs, which formerly was thought to be mortal. They were most grossly deceived; the admirable experiments of Goodwin, of the famous Goodwin, have proved it."

"But, doctor—"

"But it is a fact," answered M. Griffon, absorbed by the love of his art. To ascertain the presence of a foreign liquid in the lungs, Goodwin plunged some cats and dogs into a tub of ink for some seconds, drew them out living, and dissected my gentlemen some time afterward. Well! he convinced himself that the ink had penetrated into the lungs, and that the presence of this liquid in the organs of respiration had not caused the death of the subjects." The comte knew the physician to be an excellent man at heart, but that his phrenic passion for the sciences often made him appear hard-hearted, and almost cruel.

"Have you, at least, any hope?" asked he, with impatience.

"The extremities of the subject are very cold," said the doctor: "there is but little hope." "Ah! to die at this age—poor child! it is frightful!"

"The pupil fixed, dilated," answered the immovable doctor, raising with his finger the glazed eyelid of Fleur de Marie.

"Strange man!" cried the comte, almost

with indignation: "One would think you without feeling; and yet I have seen you watch by my bedside, night after night. If I had been your brother, you could not have been more devoted."

The doctor, quite occupied in administering to Fleur de Marie, answered the comte, without looking at him, and with settled calmness,

"Parbleu, do you believe that one meets every day with such a malignant fever, so marvellously complicated, so curious to study as the one you had? It was admirable, my good friend, admirable! Stupor, delirium, twitchings of the sinews, syncope; it united the most varied symptoms—your *dead feter*; you were also a rare thing, very rare, and eminently interesting; you were also affected in a partial and momentary manner with paralysis, if you please. If it were only for this fact, your disease had a right to all my attention; you presented to me a magnificent study; for, frankly, my dear friend, all I desire in this world is to come across just such another fine case—but one has no such luck twice." The comte shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

It was at this moment that Martial descended, leaning on the arm of La Louve, who had, as the reader knows, thrown over her wet clothes a tartan cloak belonging to Galebasse.

Struck with the pale looks of the lover of La Louve, and remarking his hands covered with coagulated blood, the comte cried, "Who is this man?"

"My husband," answered La Louve, looking at Martial with an expression of happiness and noble pride impossible to describe.

"You have a good and intrepid wife, monsieur," said the comte to him. "I saw her save this unfortunate child with rare courage."

"Oh, yes! monsieur, she is good and intrepid, my wife!" answered Martial, dwelling on the last words, and looking at La Louve in his turn with an air at once tender and affectionate. "Yes, intrepid! for she also saved my life."

"Yours!" said the astonished comte.

"See his hands, his poor hands!" said La Louve, wiping the tears which softened the indignant sparkling of her eyes. "Ah! this is horrible!" cried the comte. "This poor fellow has had his hands chopped. Look, doctor!"

Turning his head slightly, and looking over his shoulder at the numerous wounds which Galebasse had made, the doctor said, "Open and shut your hand." Martial executed this movement with much pain. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, continued to occupy himself with Fleur de Marie, and said disdainfully, as if with regret, "These wounds are absolutely nothing serious. None of the tendons are injured; in eight days the subject can use his hands." "Then, monsieur, my husband will not be a cripple!" cried La Louve, with gratitude.

The doctor shook his head negatively.

"And La Goumousse, monsieur! She will live, will she not?" asked La Louve. "Oh! she must live; my husband and I owe her so much." Then turning towards Martial, "Poor little thing! There she is, she of whom I spoke. It is she who perhaps will be the cause of our happiness. It is she who gave me the idea of telling you all I have said. See what chances have done, that I should save her—and here too!"

"She is our Providence," said Martial, struck with the beauty of La Goualeuse. "What an angel face! Oh! she will live, will she not, Monsieur le Docteur?" "I don't know," answered the physician; "but, in the first place, perhaps, she will remain here; can she have the necessary attentions?"

"Here!" cried La Louve; "why they murder here!"

"Hush! hush!" said Martial.

The comte and doctor looked at La Louve with surprise. "This house has a bad reputation. It surprises me the less," whispered the physician to M. de Saint Rémy.

"You have, then, been the victim of violence?" asked the comte. "Who wounded you in this manner?" "It is nothing, monsieur. I had a dispute here, a fight ensued, and I have been wounded. But this young girl cannot remain in the house," added he, in a gloomy manner. "I shall not remain myself, neither my wife, nor my brother, nor my sister. We leave the island never to return."

"Oh, what joy!" cried both of the children.

"Then what must we do?" said the doctor, regarding Fleur de Marie. "It is impossible to think of transporting this subject in this state of prostration. Yet, happily, my house is close at hand, and my gardener's wife and daughter will make excellent nurses. Since this asphyxia from submersion interests you, you shall overlook her attendants, my dear Saint Rémy, and I will come and see her every day."

"And you play the part of a hard-hearted, unmerciful man," cried the comte, "when you have a most generous heart, as this proposition proves."

"If the subject sinks, as is possible, there will be a most interesting autopsy, which will allow me to confirm once more the assertions of Goodwin."

"What you say is frightful," said the comte.

"For him who knows how to read it, the human body is a book where one learns to save the life of the sick," said Doctor Griffon, stoically.

"In fine, you do good," said M. de Saint Rémy, bitterly; "that is the important thing. What matters the cause, as long as the benefit exists? Poor child, the more I look at her, the more she interests me."

"And she deserves it, 'allez!' monsieur," cried La Louve, passionately, drawing near.

"You know her?" said the comte.

"Do I know her, monsieur? It is to her that I owe the happiness of my life; in saving her I have not done as much for her as she has done for me."

"And who is she?" asked the comte.

"An angel, monsieur; all that there is good in the world. Yes, and although she is dressed as a peasant girl, there is not a 'bourgeoise,' not a grand lady who can talk as well as she can, with her little soft voice, just like music. She is a noble girl, 'allez!' and courageous and good."

"How did she fall in the water?"

"I do not know, monsieur."

"She is not a peasant girl, then?" asked the comte.

"A peasant girl! look at her small white hands, monsieur."

"It is true," said M. de Saint Rémy; "what a singular mystery! But her name, her family?"

"Come," said the doctor, interrupting the conversation, "the subject must be carried to the boat."

Half an hour afterward, Fleur de Marie, who had not yet recovered her senses, was taken to the house of the physician, placed in a warm bed, and maternally watched by the gardener's wife, assisted by La Louve. The doctor promised M. de Saint Rémy, who was more and more interested in La Goualeuse, to return the same evening to visit her.

Martial went to Paris with François and Amanda, La Louve not being willing to leave Fleur de Marie until she was out of danger.

The island of the Ravageur remained deserted. We shall soon meet with its wretched occupants at Bras-Rouge's, where they had agreed to meet La Chouette to murder the diamond broker.

In the mean while, we will conduct the reader to the 'rendezvous' that Tom, the brother of Sarah, had given to the horrible old woman, the accomplice of the Maître d'Ecole.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PORTRAIT.

Half serpent and half cat.—WOLFGANG, IV. II.

THOMAS SEYTON, brother of the comtesse, Sarah McGregor, walked impatiently up and down on one of the boulevards near to the Observatoire, when he saw La Chouette appear.

The old wretch had on a white cap, and was wrapped up in a large red plaid shawl; the point of a round and very sharp dagger stuck through the bottom of the straw 'cabas' which she carried on her arm; this had once belonged to the Maître d'Ecole, but Tom did not perceive it.

"Three o'clock strikes at the Luxembourg," said the old woman. "I arrive like March in Lent, I hope?"

"Come," answered Thomas Seyton; and walking before her, he crossed some waste ground, entered a deserted street situated near the "Rue Cassini," stopped about the middle of the passage, where it was obstructed by a turnstile, opened a small door, made a sign for La Chouette to follow him, and after having taken a few steps in an alley shaded with large trees, said,

"Wait here," and disappeared.

"If he don't make me lose too much time," said La Chouette; "I must be at Bras-Rouge's at five, on *estourbir* the broker. Ah! speaking of that, and my *surin* (dagger), the scoundrel, he has his nose out of the window," added the old woman, seeing the point of the dagger sticking through her basket. "So much for not having put on his cap."

And taking it from the *cabas*, she placed it in such a manner, that it was completely concealed.

"It is a tool of Fourline's," said she. "Did he not ask me for it, to kill the rats, which come and laugh at him, in his cellar? Poor beasts! *plus souvent*. They have only the old man without eyes to divert them, and keep them

company! The least they can do is to nibble him a little. Thus I don't wish him to do any harm to these rats, and I keep the *surin*. Besides, I shall soon want it for the broker, perhaps. Thirty thousand francs' worth of diamonds—what a treasure for each of us! A good day's work; it is not like the other day! This brigand of a notary, whom I wanted to pluck—ah! well, yes! I did threaten him, if he would not give me money, to inform that it was his 'bonne' who gave me La Goualeuse, through Tournemine, when she was quite small; nothing frightens him. He called me an old liar, and turned me out of doors. Good, good! I will have a letter written to these people at the farm, where Pegriotte was sent, and inform them it was the notary who abandoned her. They know, perhaps, her family, and when she leaves Saint Lazare, it will be hot work for this 'gredin' of a Jacques Ferrand. But some one comes—hold! it is the little pale lady who was disguised as a man at the *tapis-franc* of the Ogresse; and the same whom we robbed in the ruins near Notre Dame," added La Chouette, seeing Sarah appear at the other end of the alley. "Some more business to be done; it must be on account of this little lady that we carried La Goualeuse away from the farm. If she pays well for anything new, 'ça me va encore'."

On approaching La Chouette, whom she saw for the first time since the scene at the *tapis-franc*, the countenance of Sarah expressed disgust—that disdain which people of a certain class feel when they are obliged to come in contact with wretches whom they use as instruments or accomplices.

Thomas Seyton, who, until now, had actively assisted the criminal machinations of his sister, considering them useless, had refused to continue this miserable game, consenting, nevertheless, to grant his sister, for the first and last time, an interview with La Chouette without wishing to take part in any new schemes he might hear.

Having been unable to bring Rodolphe back to her by breaking the ties which she thought dear to him, the comtesse hoped, as we have said, to render him the dupe of an infamous trick, the success of which might realize the dream of this opinionated, ambitious, and cruel woman. It was in agitation to persuade Rodolphe that the daughter, whom he had supposed dead, was alive, and to substitute some orphan in the place of his daughter.

The reader knows that Jacques Ferrand, having formally refused to enter into this plot, in spite of Sarah's threats, had resolved to make way with Fleur de Marie, as much from dread of the revelations of La Chouette, as from fear of the comtesse. But she had not renounced her designs, for she was almost certain of corrupting or intimidating the notary, when she had secured a girl capable of playing the part designed for her.

After a moment's silence, Sarah said to La Chouette, "Are you adroit, discreet, and resolute?"

"Adroit as a monkey, resolute as a dog, dumb as a fish, there's La Chouette, just as the devil has made her, ready to serve you, if she is capable—and she is," answered the old

woman, in a lively manner. "I hope we have famously deceived the young country girl, who is safely fastened up at Saint Lazare for two good months." "The question is no longer of her, but of other things."

"As you wish, my little lady. As long as there is money at the end of what you are about to propose, we shall be like two fingers of a hand."

Sarah could not suppress a movement of disgust. "You must know," said she, "some common people—some unfortunate family?"

"There are more of them than *millionaires*; one can choose; 'Dieu merci,' there is a rich misery in Paris."

"You must find for me a young orphan girl, above all, one who has lost her parents very young. She must be of an agreeable face, of a sweet temper, and not more than seventeen."

La Chouette looked at Sarah with astonishment.

"Such an orphan cannot be difficult to find," resumed the comtesse; "there are so many foundlings."

"Ah! ça; but say, now, my little lady, have you not forgotten La Goualeuse? Just what you want."

"Whom do you mean by La Goualeuse?"

"The young person whom we carried off from Bouqueval."

"I tell you, we have nothing to do with her!"

"But listen to me, then; and, above all, reward me with good advice: you wish an orphan, as gentle as a lamb, beautiful as day, and who is not seventeen?"

"Without doubt."

"Well, then, take La Goualeuse when she comes out of Saint Lazare; just what you want—as if made to order; for she was only six years old when this 'gredin' of a Jacques Ferrand (about six years ago) gave her to me, with a thousand francs, to get rid of her. It was a man named Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort, who brought her to me, saying, that she was doubtless a child they wanted to get rid of, or pass for dead."

"Jacques Ferrand, say you!" cried Sarah, in a voice so changed that La Chouette stepped back with alarm. "The notary, Jacques Ferrand," repeated Sarah, "gave you this child, and—she could not finish. Her emotion was too violent; with her hands stretched towards La Chouette, trembling violently, surprise and joy were expressed on her countenance."

"But I did not know you were going to fire up in this manner, my little lady," said the old woman. "Yet it is very plain. Ten years ago, an old acquaintance, Tournemine, said to me, 'Do you wish to take charge of a little girl that some one wants to get rid of? If she lives or dies, all the same; there is a thousand francs to gain; you may do with the child what you please.'"

"Ten years ago?" cried Sarah.

"Ten years."

"A little blonde?"

"A little blonde."

"With blue eyes?"

"With blue eyes, blue as the 'bleuets'."

"And it is she, who, at the farm—"

"We packed up for Saint Lazare. I must say that I did not expect to find her there—this Pegriotte."

"Oh ! mon Dieu ! mon Dieu !" cried Sarah, falling on her knees, and raising her hands and eyes towards heaven ; " thy ways are impenetrable. I bow before thy mysterious providence. Oh ! if such happiness were possible—but no, I cannot believe it ; it would be too much—no !" Then, suddenly rising, she said to La Chouette, who looked at her with amazement, " Come."

And Sarah walked before the old woman with hurried steps. At the end of the alley, she ascended some steps leading to the glass door of a cabinet, sumptuously furnished.

At the moment when La Chouette was about to enter, Sarah made her a sign to remain without. Then she rung a bell violently. A servant appeared.

" I am not at home to any one—let no one in ; do you understand ! absolutely no one."

The domestic retired, and Sarah, to be more secure, locked the door.

La Chouette heard the orders given to the servant, and saw Sarah lock the door. The comtesse, turning to her, said, " Come in quickly, and shut the door." La Chouette obeyed.

Hastily opening a secretary, Sarah took from it an ebony casket, which she placed on a desk in the middle of the room, and made a sign for La Chouette to come near her.

The casket contained many jewel boxes, placed one on the other, enclosing magnificent ornaments.

Sarah was so impatient to reach the bottom of the casket, that she threw out on the table these boxes splendidly furnished with necklaces, bracelets, and diadems, where rubies, emeralds, and diamonds sparkled with a thousand fires. La Chouette was astounded. She was armed, she was shut up alone with the comtesse, her flight was easy, secure. An infernal idea crossed the mind of this monster. But to execute this new misdeed, she must get her poniard from the basket, and draw near to Sarah, without exciting her suspicion.

With the cunning of a tiger-cat, who crawls and treacherously advances on its prey, the old woman profited by the preoccupation of the comtesse to steal around the bureau which separated her from her victim. She had already commenced this treacherous evolution, when she was obliged to stop suddenly. Sarah drew a medallion from the bottom of the box, leaned on the table, handed it to La Chouette with a trembling hand, and said, " Look at this portrait."

" It is La Pegriotte !" cried La Chouette, struck with the great likeness ; " it is the little girl who was given to me ; I see her as she was when Tournemine brought her to me. There is her thick curly hair which I cut off at once, and sold well, ma foi !" " You recognise her, it was she ? Oh ! I conjure you, do not deceive me—do not deceive me !" " I tell you, my little lady, that it is La Pegriotte ; it is as if I could see her before me," said La Chouette, trying to approach Sarah without being remarked ; " even now she looks like this portrait. If you saw her, you would be struck with it."

Sarah had experienced no sorrow, no fright on learning that her child had, during ten years, lived miserable and abandoned. No remorse on thinking that she herself had torn her from

the peaceful retreat where Rodolphe had placed her. This unnatural mother did not at once interrogate La Chouette with terrible anxiety as to the past life of her child. No ; ambition with Sarah had for a long time stifled maternal tenderness.

It was not joy at finding her daughter which transported her, it was the certain hope of seeing realized the proud dream of all her life. Rodolphe was interested for this unfortunate creature, had protected without knowing her, what would be his joy when he discovered her to be his child ! He was free, the comtesse a widow—Sarah already saw gladden before her eyes a sovereign's crown. La Chouette, still advancing with cautious steps, had already reached one end of the table, and placed her dagger perpendicularly in her basket, the handle close to the opening, quite ready. She was only a few steps from the comtesse, when the latter suddenly said, " Do you know how to write ?" And pushing back with her hand the boxes and jewels, she opened a blotter placed before an inkstand. " No, madame, I cannot write," answered La Chouette at all hazard. " I am going to write, then, from your dictation. Tell me all the circumstances attending the abandonment of this little girl." And Sarah, seating herself in an arm-chair before the desk, took a pen and made a motion for the old woman to draw near to her.

The eyes of La Chouette twinkled. At length, she was standing erect alongside of Sarah's seat. She, bending over the table, prepared to write. " I will read aloud slowly," said the comtesse—" you will correct my mistakes." " Yes, madame," answered La Chouette, watching every movement.

Then she slipped her right hand into her "cass," so as to take hold of the dagger without being seen.

The comtesse began to write :

" I declare that—"

But interrupting herself, and turning towards La Chouette, who already had hold of the handle of her dagger, Sarah added,

" At what time was this child delivered to you ?"

" In the month of February, 1827."

" And by whom ?" asked Sarah, with her face still turned towards La Chouette.

" By Pierre Tournemine, now in the galleys at Rochefort. Madame Séraphin, housekeeper of the notary, gave the little girl to him."

The comtesse turned to write and read in a loud voice : " I declare that in the month of February, 1827, the named—"

La Chouette had drawn out the dagger.

Already she raised it to strike her victim between the shoulders. Sarah again turned.

La Chouette, not to be discovered, placed quickly her right arm on the back of the chair, and leaned towards her to answer her new question.

" I have forgotten the name of the man who confided the child to you."

" Pierre Tournemine," answered La Chouette.

" Pierre Tournemine," repeated Sarah, continuing to write—" now in the galleys at Rochefort, placed in my hands a child who had been confided to him by the housekeeper of—"

The countess could not finish.

La Chouette, after having softly disencumbered herself of the cabas by dropping it on the ground, had thrown herself on the comtesse with as much rapidity as fury; with her left hand she caught her by the throat, and, holding her face down to the table, she had, with her right hand, planted the dagger between the shoulders.

This horrible deed was executed so quickly that the comtesse did not utter a single cry or groan. Still seated, she remained with her face on the table. The pen had fallen from her hand.

"The same blow as Faurline's, the little old man of the Rue du Roule," said the monster. "Another one who will talk no more—her account is made."

And La Chouette, gathering in haste the jewels, which she threw into her basket, did not perceive that her victim still breathed.

The murder and robbery accomplished, the horrible old woman opened the glass door, disappeared rapidly in the green alley, went out by the small door, and reached the waste ground. Near the observatoire, she took a hack, which conveyed her to Bras-Rouge's. The widow Martial, Nicolas, Calchasse, and Barbillon had, as the reader knows, given a rendezvous to La Chouette in this den, to rob and kill the diamond broker.

CHAPTER VIII.

L'AGENT DE SURETÉ.

THE reader is already acquainted with the tavern of the *Cour Saignant*, situated in the Champs Elysées, near the Cours la Reine, in one of the vast moats which bounded this promenade some years since. The inhabitants of the island had not yet appeared. Since the departure of M. Bradamanti, who had accompanied the stepmother of Madame d'Harville to Normandy, Tortillard had returned to his father's house.

Placed "en vedette" on the top of the staircase, the little cripple was to notify the arrival of Martial by a concerted signal, Bras-Rouge being then in secret conference with an "agent de sûreté" named Narcisse Borel, who, it will be remembered, was seen at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse, when he came there to arrest two villains accused of murder.

This agent, a man of about forty years, strong and thick set, had his skin stained, a sharp and piercing eye, and face completely shaved, so as to be able to assume the different disguises necessary to his dangerous expeditions; for it was often necessary for him to unite the sudden transformations of a comedian with the energy and courage of the soldier, to surprise certain bandits whom he was obliged to match in courage and determination. Narcisse Borel was, in a word, one of the most useful, the most active instruments of the providence, on a small scale, modestly and vulgarly called the police.

Let us return to the interview between Borel and Bras-Rouge. Their conversation seemed very animated. "Yes," said the "agent de sûreté," "you are accused of profiting by your

position in a double manner, by taking part with impunity in the robberies of a band of very dangerous malefactors, and of giving false information concerning them to the police. Take care, Bras-Rouge; if this should be proved, they would have no mercy on you." "Alas! I know I am accused of this; and it is afflicting, my good Monsieur Narcisse," replied Bras-Rouge, giving to his weasel face an expression of hypocritical sorrow. "But I hope that to-day they will render me justice, and that my good faith will be certainly acknowledged." "We shall see." "How can I be suspected? Have I not given proofs? Is it not I—yes or no—who, in time past, caused you to arrest, in 'flagrant délit, Ambroise Martial, one of the most dangerous malefactors in Paris! For, as is said, that runs in his race, and the race of Martial comes from hell, where it will soon return, if the 'bon Dieu' is just."

"All this is very fine; but Ambroise was informed that he was about to be arrested; if I had not advanced the hour indicated by you, he would have escaped." "Do you believe me capable, Monsieur Narcisse, of having secretly given him information of your intentions?"

"All I know is, that I received a pistol-shot from the brigand, which, very fortunately, only went through my arm." "Marry, Monsieur Narcisse, it is very certain that in your calling one is exposed to such mistakes." "Ah! do you call that a mistake?" "Certainly; for doubtless he wished, the scoundrel, to plant the ball in your body." "In the arms, in the body, or in the head, no matter; it is not of that I complain: every trade has its disagreements!"

"And its pleasures also, Monsieur Narcisse; and its pleasures! For example, when a man as cunning, as adroit, as courageous as you are, is for a long time on the tracks of a nest of robbers; follows them from place to place—from house to house, with a good blood-hound like your servant Bras-Rouge, and he succeeds in getting them into a mousetrap, from which not one can escape, acknowledge, Monsieur Narcisse, that there is great pleasure in it—a huntsman's joy—without counting the service rendered to justice," added the landlord of the *Cour Saignant*. "I should be of your opinion, if the blood-hound was faithful; but I am afraid he is not." "Ah! Monsieur Narcisse, you think—" "I think, that instead of putting us on the scent, you amuse yourself by deceiving us, and that you abuse the confidence placed in you. Every day you promise to aid us to place our hands on the band; this day never comes." "And if this day comes to-day, Monsieur Narcisse, as I am sure it will; and if I cause you to pick up Barbillon, Nicolas Martial, the widow, her daughter, and La Chouette, will it be, yes or no, a good haul? Will you still suspect me?"

"No; and you will have rendered a real service; for we have against this band strong presumptions, almost certain suspicions, but, unfortunately, no proofs."

"Hold a moment—caught in the very act, allowing you to nab them so, will aid furiously to display their cards, heu! Monsieur Narcisse!"

"Doubtless; and you assure me there has been no provocation on your part in the affair they have on hand?"

"No, on my honour! It is La Chouette who

came and proposed to me to entice the broker here, when this infernal '*borgnesse*' learned, through my son, that Morel, the lapidary, who lived in the Rue du Temple, worked in real instead of false stones, and that the *Mère Mathieu* had often about her jewels of value. I accepted the affair, proposing to La Chouette to add Barbillion and the Martials, so as to have the whole gang in hand."

"And the Maître d'Ecole, this man so dangerous, so strong, and so ferocious, who was always with La Chouette? one of the '*habitués*' of the tapis-franc?"

"The Maître d'Ecole!" said Bras-Rouge, feigning astonishment.

"Yes, a galley-slave escaped from Rochefort, named Anselme Duresnal, condemned for life. It is known now that he has disfigured himself so as not to be recognised. Have you no information of him?"

"None," answered Bras-Rouge, intrepidly, who had his reasons for this falsehood, for the Maître d'Ecole was then shut up in one of the cellars of the tavern.

"There is every reason to believe that the Maître d'Ecole is the author of some new murders. It would be an important capture. For six weeks past, no one knows what has become of him."

"Thus we are reproached for having lost sight of him. Always reproaches! Monsieur Narcisse! always."

"Not without reason. And the smuggling?"

"Must I not know all sorts of folks, smugglers as well as anybody else, to put you on the scent? I informed you of this tunnel to introduce legends; beginning outside of the Barrière du Trône and ending in a house in the 'rue.'"

"I know all that," said Narcisse, interrupting Bras-Rouge; "but for one you denounce, you let perhaps ten escape, and you continue your trade with impunity. I am sure you feed out of two mangers, as the saying is."

"Ah! Monsieur Narcisse, I am incapable of such dishonest hunger."

"And this is not all. Rue du Temple, No. 17, lives a woman Burette, pawnbroker, who is accused of being your private receiver."

"What would you have me do, Monsieur Narcisse? one says so many things, the world is so wicked—once more I say, I must mix with the greatest number of scoundrels possible. I must even do as they do, worse than they, to avoid suspicions; but it cuts me to the heart to imitate them—to the heart—I must be well devoted to the service, '*allez*,' to follow such a trade."

"Poor dear man! I pity you with all my heart."

"You laugh, Monsieur Narcisse. But if all these stories are believed, why do they not pay La Mère Burette and myself a visit?"

"You know well enough—not to startle these bandits whom you have for so long a time promised to deliver to us." "And I am going to deliver them to you, Monsieur Narcisse; in one hour's time you shall have them bound, and without much trouble, for there are three women. As to Barbillion and Nicolas Martial, they are as ferocious as tigers, but cowardly as chickens."

"Tigers or chickens," said Narcisse, opening his long riding coat and showing the butt-end of two pistols, which stuck out of the pockets of his pantaloons, "I have something here to serve them." "You will do well to take two of your men with you, Monsieur Narcisse; when they find themselves cornered, the greatest cowards become sometimes tigers."

"I will place two of my men in the little lower room, alongside of the one where you will put the broker. At the first cry, I will appear at one door, my two men at the other."

"You must make haste, for the band may arrive every moment, Monsieur Narcisse."

"So be it; I go to place my men. I hope it will not be for nothing this time."

The conversation was interrupted by the concerted signal. Bras-Rouge looked out of a window to see who Tortillard announced.

"Look! here is La Chouette already! Well! do you believe me now, Monsieur Narcisse?"

"This is something, but it is not all; in fine, we shall see. I go to place my men."

And the "agent de sûreté" disappeared through a side door.

CHAPTER IX.

LA CHOUETTE.

THE rapidity of the step of La Chouette, the ferocious ardour of a desire for rapine and murder which she still possessed, had flushed her hideous visage; her green eye sparkled with savage joy.

Tortillard followed her, jumping and limping. Just as she was descending the last steps of the stairs, the son of Bras-Rouge, through a wicked frolic, placed his foot on the trailing folds of La Chouette's dress. This caused the old woman to stumble; not being able to catch hold of the balusters, she fell on her knees, her hands both stretched out, abandoning her precious "*cabas*," from whence escaped a golden bracelet set with diamonds and fine pearls. La Chouette, having, in her fall, excoriated her fingers a little, picked up the bracelet, which had not escaped the quick eyesight of Tortillard, rose up, and threw herself furiously on the little cripple, who approached her with a hypocritical air, saying,

"Ah! mon Dieu! your foot slipped?"

Without answering, La Chouette seized him by the hair, and, stooping down, bit him in the cheek; the blood spirted from the wound. Strange as it may appear, Tortillard, notwithstanding his wickedness, and the great pain he endured, uttered not a complaint nor cry. He wiped his bleeding face, and said, with a forced laugh,

"I would rather you would not kiss me so hard another time, hé! La Chouette."

"Wicked little devil, why did you step on my gown to make me fall?"

"I! Ah, well! '*par exemple*,' I swear to you that I did not do it on purpose, my good Chouette; as if your little Tortillard would wish to hurt you; he loves you too well for that. You did well to beat him, affront him, bite him; he is attached to you like the poor little dog is to his master," said the child, in a caressing and coaxing voice.

Deceived by the hypocrisy of Tortillard, La Chouette answered, "Very well! if I have bitten you wrongfully, it shall be punishment for some other time, when you have deserved it, brigand. Come, 'vive la joie!' to-day I bear no malice. Where is your cheat of a father?" "In the house; shall I go and call him?" "No. The Martials, have they come yet?" "Not yet." "Then I have time to go and see Fourline; I want to speak to old *No-eyes*."

"Are you going to the cellar of the Maître d'Ecole?" asked Tortillard, hardly concealing his diabolical joy.

"What is that to you?" "To me?" "Yes; you asked me that in such a droll way." "Because I thought of something funny." "What?"

"That you must have brought a pack of cards along to amuse him," answered Tortillard in a cunning manner; "it will be a little change for him; he only plays at biting with the rats; that game he always wins, and in the end it tires him."

La Chouette laughed violently at this witticism, and said to the little cripple, "Mamma's little monkey. I do not know a *moutard* that is more wicked than you are. You little 'gueux,' go and get me a candle; you shall light me down to see Fourline, and you shall help me to open his door; you know that I can't move it alone." "Ah! well, no, it is too dark in the cellar," said Tortillard, shaking his head.

"How! how! you, who are as wicked as the devil, you a coward? I would like to see that—come, go quick, and say to your father I will soon return; that I am with Fourline; that we are talking about the publication of our banns of marriage—eh! eh! eh!" added the monster, chuckling. "Come, make haste, you shall be groomsman, and if you are a good boy, you shall have my garter." Tortillard went to get a light, and La Chouette, elated with the success of her robbery, amused herself, while he was gone, in handling the precious jewels in her basket. It was to conceal temporarily this treasure that she wished to visit the Maître d'Ecole in his cellar, and not to torment, as was her usual custom, her new victim. We will mention directly why, with the consent of Bras-Rouge, La Chouette had confined the Maître d'Ecole in the same subterranean hole where this brigand had formerly precipitated Rodolphe.

Tortillard, holding a light, reappeared at the door of the cavern. La Chouette followed him to the lower room, into which opened the large trap-door already described.

The son of Bras-Rouge, protecting his light with the hollow of his hand, and preceding the old woman, descended slowly a flight of steep stone steps leading to the entrance of the cellar which had so nearly been the tomb of Rodolphe.

Arrived at the foot, Tortillard appeared to hesitate about following La Chouette.

"Well! wicked 'lamkin,' go on then," said she, turning round.

"Dame! it is so dark, and, besides, you go so fast, La Chouette; but stop, I'd rather go back, and leave you the candle."

"And the door of the cellar, imbecile! Can I open it alone? Will you go on?" "No, I am too much afraid." "If I come to you, take care."

"Since you threaten me, I'll go back."

And he retreated a few steps.

"Well! listen: be a good boy," answered La Chouette, restraining her anger; "I will give you something."

"Very well," said the boy, drawing near; "speak so to me, and you will make me do all you can wish, mother La Chouette." "Advance, advance, I am in a hurry." "Yes, but promise that you will let me 'torment' the Maître d'Ecole?"

"Some other day; now I have not the time."

"Only a little; just to make him foam."

"Some other time, I say; I must return at once."

"Why, then, do you open the door of his prison?"

"None of your business. Come, now, will you finish? The Martials perhaps are already above; I want to speak to them. Be a good boy, and you shan't be sorry; go on."

"I must love you well, La Chouette, you make me do just as you please," said Tortillard, advancing slowly. The trembling, sickly light of the candle, only made darkness visible in this gloomy passage, reflecting the black shadow of this hideous child on the green and crumbling walls, streaming with humidity.

At the end of the passage, through the obscurity, could be perceived the low, broken arch of the entrance to the cellar, its heavy door secured with bands of iron, and contrasting strongly, in the shade, with the plaid shawl and white bonnet of La Chouette.

With their united efforts, the door opened, creaking on its rusty hinges. A puff of humid vapour escaped from this hole, which was as dark as night.

The candle, placed on the ground, cast a ray of light on the first steps of the stone staircase; while the lower part was lost in total obscurity.

A cry, or, rather, a savage howl, came up from the depths of the cellar.

"Ah! there is Fourline, who says 'bonjour' to his mamma," said La Chouette, ironically; and she descended a few steps to conceal her "cables" in some corner.

"I am hungry!" cried the Maître d'Ecole, in a voice trembling with rage; "do you, then, wish me to die here like a mad beast?"

"You are hungry, poor puss?" said La Chouette, shouting with laughter. "Well! such your thumb."

The noise of a chain shaken violently was heard; then a sigh of restrained rage.

"Take care! take care! you will hurt your leg, as you did at the farm of Bouqueval, poor, dear papa!" said Tortillard.

"The child is right; keep quiet, Fourline," said the old woman; "the chain and rings are strong, old *No-eyes*; it comes from the Père Micou, who only sells first-rate articles. It is your own fault; for why did you allow yourself to be tied when you were asleep? afterward, there was nothing to be done but to slip on the chain, and bring you down here, in this nice cool place, to preserve you, old bean."

"It's a shame—he'll grow mouldy," said Tortillard.

The chains were heard rattling anew.

"Eh! eh! Fourline jumps like a June bug tied by the paw," cried the old woman; "I think I can see him."

"June bug! stole! stole! stole! Your husband's the Maitre d'Ecole!" chanted Tortillard.

This variation augmented the hilarity of La Chouette. Having placed her "cabas" in a hole under one of the steps, she said, "Do you see, Fourline!"

"He does not see," answered Tortillard.

"The boy is right. Ah, well! Do you hear, Fourline! you should not have hindered me, when we returned from the farm, from washing Pegriotte's face with vitriol. You should not have played the good dog, simpleton. And then to talk of your conscience, which was becoming prudish. I saw that your '*pâte de franc, gueux*' was becoming sour, that it was turning honest, as they say to a spy, that some day or other you might *magna sur nous* (inform against us), old *No-eyes*; and then—"

"The old No-eyes *va manger sur toi*, La Chouette, for he is hungry," cried Tortillard, suddenly pushing, with all his strength, the old woman by the back.

La Chouette fell forward, uttering a dreadful imprecation, and rolled to the foot of the steps.

"Kiss—kiss—kiss! La Chouette is yours! jump on her, old man," added Tortillard.

Then seizing hold of the "cabas," which he had seen the old woman hide, he ran up the stairs precipitately, crying with savage joy, "There is a push worth double of what I gave you a while ago, La Chouette! This time you shall not bite me. Ah! you thought I didn't care; thank you, I bleed still."

"I have her, oh, I have her!" cried the Maitre d'Ecole from the bottom of the cellar.

"If you have her, old man, fair play," said the boy, chuckling; and he stopped on the last step of the staircase.

"Help!" cried La Chouette, in a strangled voice.

"Thank you, Tortillard," answered the Maitre d'Ecole, "thank you;" and he uttered an aspiration of fearful joy. "Oh! I pardon you the harm you have done me, and to reward you, you shall hear La Chouette sing! Listen well; the bird of death—"

"Bravo, bravo! here I am in the dress circle, private box," said Tortillard, seating himself at the top of the stairs.

CHAPTER X.

THE CELLAR.

TORTILLARD, seated on the first step, raised the light to endeavour to see what was going on in the cellar, but the darkness was too great; so faint a light could not dissipate it. The son of Bras-Rouge could distinguish nothing. The struggle between the Maitre d'Ecole and La Chouette was silent and furious, without a word, without a cry. Only from time to time could be heard a hard breathing or suffocating respiration, which always accompanies violent and continued struggles.

Tortillard, seated on the stone step, began to stamp his feet in the manner peculiar to spectators anxious for the commencement of a play; then he uttered the familiar cry of the occupants of the *paradise* in the theatres on the

Boulevards, "Eh! the curtain! Begin, begin! Music! music!" "Oh! I have you as I wish," murmured the Maitre d'Ecole from the bottom of the cellar; "and you shall—"

A desperate movement of La Chouette interrupted him. She struggled with that energy which is caused by the fear of death "Loud—er! We can't hear," cried Tortillard. "You have a fine chance at my hand. I have you as I wish to have you," continued the Maitre d'Ecole. Then, having doubtless succeeded in holding La Chouette, he added, "That's it. Now listen—" "Tortillard, call your father!" cried La Chouette, in a breathless, exhausted tone. "Help! help!"

"Turn out that old woman! turn her out!" "We can't hear!" said the little cripple, screaming with laughter. "Silence! out with her!"

The cries of La Chouette could not reach the upper apartments. The wretch, seeing she had no aid to expect from the son of Bras-Rouge, tried a last effort.

"Tortillard, go for help; and I will give you my 'cabas'; it is full of jewels. It is there under a stone."

"How generous you are! Thank you, madame! Don't you know that I have your 'cabas'? Hold! don't you hear it jingle?" said Tortillard, shaking it. "But, 'par exemple,' give me two sous to buy some hot cake, and I'll go seek papa!" "Have pity on me, and I—" La Chouette could not proceed. Again there was a pause.

The little cripple recommenced the stamping of his feet, and cried, "Why don't you begin! Oh! the curtain! Begin, begin! Music, music!"

"In this manner, La Chouette, you can no longer deafen me with your cries," said the Maitre d'Ecole, after some minutes, during which he had succeeded in gagging the old woman. "You know well," resumed he, in a slow and hollow tone, "that I do not wish to finish at once. Torture for torture. You have made me suffer enough. I must talk to you a long time before I kill you—yes, a long time. It will be frightful for you! What agony, *beia!*"

"Ah, ça! none of your nonsense! eh! old man," cried Tortillard, half rising. "Correct her; but do not hurt her. You speak of killing her; it's only a joke, is it not? I hold to my Chouette. I have lent her to you, but you will return her to me. Don't damage her. I will not have any one harm my Chouette, or I will go and call papa." "Be not alarmed; she shall only have what she deserves—a profitable lesson," said the brigand, to reassure Tortillard, fearing the little cripple would go for help.

"Very good! bravo! Now the play begins," said the son of Bras-Rouge, who did not believe that the Maitre d'Ecole seriously meditated to destroy La Chouette.

"Let us talk a little," resumed the Maitre d'Ecole, in a calm voice, to the old woman. "In the first place, since the dream I had at the farm of Bouqueval, which brought before my eyes all our crimes, since this dream, which almost made me mad, which will make me mad—for in the solitude, the profound state of isolation in which I live, all my thoughts, in spite of myself, tend towards this dream—a strange change has taken place within me. Yes, I have

thought with horror of my past wickedness. In the first place, I did not allow you to disfigure the Goualeuse. That was nothing. In chaining me here in this cave, in making me suffer cold and hunger, but in delivering me from your provocation, you have left me alone to all the horrors of my thoughts. Oh! you do not know what it is to be alone, always alone, with a black veil over the eyes, as the implacable man said who punished me. It is fearful! See now! It is in this cellar that I wished to kill him, and this cellar is the place of my punishment. It will be perhaps my tomb.

"I repeat to you, this is frightful. All that this man predicted is realized. He told me: 'You have abused your strength: you shall be the sport, plaything of the weakest.' This has been. He told me: 'Henceforth, separated from the exterior world, face to face with the eternal remembrance of your crimes, one day you will repent them.' And this day has arrived; solitude has confirmed it. I could not have thought it possible. Another proof that I am, perhaps, less wicked than formerly, is, that I experience an indescribable joy in holding you there, monster, not to avenge myself, but to avenge our victims. Yes, I shall have accomplished a duty, when, with my own hand, I shall have punished my accomplices. A voice tells me, that if you had fallen sooner into my power, much blood—much blood might have been spared. I feel now a horror of my past murders, and yet, is it not strange! it is without fear, it is with security that I intend to execute on you a frightful murder, with horrible refinement of cruelty. Speak! speak! can you realise this?"

"Bravo, bravo! well played, old *No-eyes*! You warm up, 'ça chauffe,'" cried Tortillard, applauding. "All this is only a joke!"

"Only a joke!" answered the *Maitre d'Ecole*, in a hollow voice. "Hold still, then, *La Chouette*; I must finish explaining to you how, little by little, I came to repent. This revelation will be odious to you, heart of iron, and it will also prove to you how meritorious I ought to be in the vengeance I wish to exercise on you in the name of our victims. I must hurry on. The joy of having you thus makes my blood run wild, my head throb with violence, as when I think of my dream. My mind wanders; perhaps one of my attacks is coming on; but I shall have time to render the approaches of death more frightful, in forcing you to hear me."

"Bold *La Chouette*!" cried Tortillard; "be bold with your answer. Don't you know your part! Come, tell the devil to prompt you, my old dear."

"Oh! you do well to struggle and bite," said the *Maitre d'Ecole*, after a pause; "you shall not escape; you have cut my fingers to the bone, but I will tear your tongue out if you stir."

"Let us continue to converse."

"On finding myself alone—constantly alone in obscurity and silence—I began to have fits of furious rage; powerless, for the first time I lost my senses, my head wandered. Yes, although awake, I have dreamed the dream—you know! the dream. The little old man of the *Rue de Roule*—the woman drowned—the cattle-merchant—and you! soaring above all these phantoms! I tell you, all this is frightful."

"I am blind; and my thoughts assume a

form, a body, and represent continually to me, in a visible manner, almost palpable, the features of my victims."

"I should not have this fearful dream, but that my mind, continually absorbed by the recollection of my past crimes, is troubled with the same visions."

"Doubtless, when one is deprived of sight, besetting ideas trace themselves almost materially on the brain. Yet, sometimes, by force of contemplating them with resigned alarm, it seems to me that these menacing spectres have pity on me; they grow dim, fade away, and disappear. Then I think I awake from a vivid dream; but I feel myself weak, exhausted, broken, and, do you believe it—oh! how you will laugh, *La Chouette*!—I weep—do you hear! I weep. You do not laugh! But laugh! I say laugh!" *La Chouette* uttered a stifled groan. "Louder!" cried Tortillard; "can't hear." "Yes," continued the *Maitre d'Ecole*, "I wept, for I suffered, and rage is fruitless. I say to myself, To-morrow, and to-morrow, forever I shall be a prey to the same delirium, the same mournful desolation. What a life! oh! what a life!"

"And I have not chosen death, rather than to be interred alive in this abyss, which incessantly racks my thoughts!"

"Blind, solitary, and a prisoner! what can distract my thoughts? Nothing—nothing."

"When the phantoms cease for a moment to pass and repass on the black veil which I have before my eyes, there are other tortures—there are overwhelming comparisons. I say to myself, 'If I had remained an honest man, at this moment I should be free, tranquil, happy, loved, and honoured by mine own, instead of being blind and chained in this dungeon, at the mercy of my accomplices.'"

"Alas! the regret of happiness lost by crime is the first step towards repentance."

"And when to this repentance is added an expiation of frightful severity—an expiation which changes your life into a long sleep filled with avenging hallucinations or desperate reflections, perhaps then the pardon of man will follow remorse and expiation."

"Take care, old man!" cried Tortillard; "you are stealing from the part of *M. Meoress*. Found out! found out!" The *Maitre d'Ecole* paid no attention to the son of *Bras-Rouge*.

"Does it astonish you to hear me talk thus, *La Chouette*? If I had continued to harden myself, either by other bloody misdeeds, or by the savage drunkenness of a galley-slave's life, this salutary change in me had never taken place, I know well. But alone—blind—and tortured with a remorse which was visible, what could I think of? New crimes—how could I commit them? An escape—how escape? And if I escaped, where should I go—what should I do with my liberty? No; I must henceforth live in an eternal night, between the anguish of repentance and the alarm of horrifying apparitions by which I am pursued. Yet sometimes a feeble ray of hope shines in the midst of the gloom—a moment of calm succeeds to my torments: yes, for sometimes I succeed in conjuring the spectres which besiege me, by opposing to them the recollections of a past life, honest and peaceful—by carrying back my thoughts to the days of my childhood."

"Happily, you see, the greatest villains have had, at least, some years of peace and innocence to offer in opposition to their long years of crime and blood.

"We are not born wicked.

"The most perverse have had the amiable simplicity of childhood—have known the sweet joys of that charming age. Thus, I repeat, sometimes I feel a bitter consolation in saying, I am at this moment the object of universal execration; but there was a time when I was beloved, protected, because I was inoffensive and good.

"Alas! I must take refuge in the past, when I can; there alone can I find any repose."

On pronouncing these last words, the voice of the *Maitre d'Ecole* had lost its acuteness; this formidable man seemed profoundly affected; he went on—

"Now, you see, the salutary influence of these thoughts is such that my rage is appeased; courage, strength, the will, all fail me to punish you; no, it is not for me to shed your blood."

"Bravo, old one! Now you see, *La Chouette*, that it was only a joke," cried *Tortillard*, applauding.

"No, it is not for me to shed your blood," resumed the *Maitre d'Ecole*; "it would be a murder—excusable perhaps, but still a murder; and I have enough with three spectres! And then, who knows, you! perhaps, you! will repent some day."

On speaking thus, the *Maitre d'Ecole* had mechanically relaxed his grasp. *La Chouette* profited by it to seize hold of the dagger which she had placed in her bosom after the murder of *Sarah*, and to strike a violent blow with it in order to disembarass herself of him altogether. He uttered a cry of great anguish. The savage phrensy of his rage, his vengeance, his hatred, his sanguinary instincts suddenly aroused, and exasperated at this attack, made an unexpected and terrible explosion, under which his reason sunk, already much shattered by so many trials.

"Ah! viper, I have felt your tooth!" cried he in a voice trembling with rage, and grasping *La Chouette* tightly, who had thought to escape. "You crawl in the cellar, *hieu*," added he, more and more wandering, "but I am going to crush you, viper, or *Chouette* (owl). You waited, doubtless, the coming of the phantoms; my ears tingle, my head turns, as when they are about to come. Yes, I am not deceived. Oh! there they are; out of the darkness they approach—they approach. How pale they are, and their blood, how it flows, red and smoking. This frightens you—you struggle. Ah, well! be tranquil, you shall not see them; I have pity on you; I shall make you blind. You shall be as me, *without eyes*." Here he paused.

La Chouette uttered a cry so horrible that *Tortillard*, alarmed, jumped from his seat, and stood erect.

The frightful cries of *La Chouette* seemed to increase the insanity of the *Maitre d'Ecole*.

"Sing," said he in a low voice, "sing, *La Chouette*, sing your song of death. You are happy; you will never more see the phantoms of our victims; the old man of the *Rue de la Roule*, the drowned woman, the cattle merchant. But I see them; they come; they touch me. Oh! how cold they are, oh!"

The last spark of intelligence in this poor wretch was extinguished in this cry of horror. Then he reasoned no more, spoke not; he behaved and roared like a wild beast: he only obeyed the savage instinct of destruction for destruction. Horrible, frightful events took place in the gloom of the cellar.

A quick, rapid trampling was heard, interrupted at frequent intervals by a dull sound, like that of a box of bones which rebounded on a stone against which one wished to break it. Acute moans, and bursts of infernal laughter, accompanied each of these blows. Then it was a death rattle of agony. Then nothing could be heard.

Nothing, but the furious trampling; nothing, but the heavy and rebounding blows, which still continued.

Soon a distant noise of footsteps and voices reached even to the depths of the cellar. Numerous lights appeared at the extremity of the subterranean passage. *Tortillard*, frozen with terror by the frightful tragedy which he had heard, but not seen, perceived several persons rapidly descend the staircase. In a moment the cellar was invaded by several police officers, at the head of whom was *Narcisse Borel*; the municipal guards closed the march. *Tortillard* was seized on the upper steps of the cellar, holding still in his hand the cabas of *La Chouette*.

Narcisse Borel, followed by some of his men, descended into the cellar of the *Maitre d'Ecole*. All stopped, struck with such a horrible spectacle. Chained by the leg to an enormous stone placed in the middle of the dungeon, the *Maitre d'Ecole*, horrible, monstrous, his hair knotted, the beard long, mouth foaming, clothed with bloody rags, turned like a wild beast around his dungeon, dragging after him, by the feet, the corpse of *La Chouette*, whose head was horribly mutilated, broken, and crushed. It needed a violent struggle to take from him the bleeding remains of his accomplice and to secure him.

After a vigorous resistance, they succeeded in transporting him to the lower room of the tavern, a dull, gloomy apartment, lighted by a single window. There were found, with irons on their hands, and guarded 'a vue,' *Barbillon*, *Nicolas Martial*, his mother and sister. They had been arrested just at the moment they were dragging off the diamond broker to murder her. She was recovering herself in another room. Stretched on the ground, and held, with great difficulty, by two officers, the *Maitre d'Ecole*, slightly wounded in the arm by *La Chouette*, but completely insensible, roared and bellowed like a baited bull. At times he almost raised himself from the earth by his convulsive movements.

Barbillon, with head down, livid face, discoloured lips, fixed and savage eye, his long black hair falling on the collar of his blouse, torn in the struggle, *Barbillon* was seated on a bench; his arms, confined by handcuffs, rested on his knees. The juvenile appearance of this scoundrel (he was hardly eighteen), and the regularity of his features, rendered still more deplorable the hideous stamp with which debauchery and crime had marked his countenance. Unmoved, he said not a word. It cannot be known whether this apparent insensibility was due to stupidity or to a frigid energy;

his breathing was rapid; and from time to time with his shackled hands he wiped the sweat from his pale forehead.

Alongside of him was placed Calebasse; her cap had been torn; her yellowish hair, tied behind with a string, hung down her back in many tangled and disordered tresses. More enraged than dispirited, her thin and jaundiced cheeks somewhat coloured, she regarded with disdain the affliction of her brother Nicolas, placed on a chair opposite.

Foreseeing the fate which awaited him, this bandit, sinking within himself, his head hanging, his knees trembling, was almost dead with affright; his teeth chattered convulsively, and he uttered low and mournful groans.

Alone, among all, the Mère Martial, the widow of the condemned, standing with her back to the wall, had lost nothing of her audacity. With her head erect, she cast a firm look around her. This mask of bronze betrayed not the slightest emotion. Yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, who was brought into the lower room, after having assisted in the minute search which the commissary had just made throughout the whole house—yet, at the sight of Bras-Rouge, we repeat, the features of the widow contracted in spite of herself; her small eyes, ordinarily dull, sparkled with rage, her compressed lips became bloodless, she stiffened her manacled hands. Then, as if she had regretted this mute manifestation of rage and impotent hatred, she conquered her emotion, and became of an icy calmness. While the commissary, assisted by his *greffier*, made his '*proces verbal*', Narcisse Borel, rubbing his hands, cast a complacent look on the important capture he had just made, and which delivered Paris from a band of dangerous criminals; but feeling of what utility Bras-Rouge had been in this expedition, he could not prevent himself from expressing to him by a glance his gratitude.

The father of Tortillard was obliged to partake, until after their judgment, the prison and fate of those whom he had denounced; like them, he wore handcuffs; still more than them, he had a trembling, alarmed air, uttering sorrowful groans, and giving to his weasel face every expression of terror. He embraced Tortillard, as if he sought some consolation in these paternal caresses.

The little cripple showed but little sensibility at these proofs of tenderness: he had just learned that, until farther orders, he was to be sent to the prison for young offenders.

"What a misfortune to part with my darling son!" cried Bras-Rouge, feigning to weep; "it is we who are the most unfortunate, Mère Martial, for they separate us from our children."

The widow could no longer contain herself: not doubting the treason of Bras-Rouge, which she had prophesied, she cried, "I was sure that you had sold my son who is at Toulon. Hold, Judas!" and she spat in his face. "You sell our heads; so be it! they will see handsome corpses—corpses of the real Martial!"

"Yes; we will not budge before *la Carline*" (the scaffold), added Calebasse, with savage pride.

The widow, pointing to Nicolas with a withering glance of contempt, said to her daughter, "This *lache* will dishonour us on the scaffold!"

Some moments afterward, the widow and Calebasse, accompanied by two agents, were placed in a hack and sent to Saint Lazare.

The three men were conducted to La Force.

The Maître d'Ecole was transported to the dépôt of the Conciergerie, where there are cells destined to receive temporarily the insane.

CHAPTER XI.

PRESENTATION.

"The evil that the wicked do without knowing it is often more cruel than that which they intended to do."—SCHILLER, *Wallenstein*, act ii.

SOME days after the murder of Madame Séraphin, the death of La Chouette, and the arrest of the band of malefactors surprised at the house of Bras-Rouge, Rodolphe repaired to the house in the Rue du Temple.

We have said that—intending to overcome cunning by cunning, and to expose the concealed crimes of Jacques Ferrand to the punishment they merited, notwithstanding the address and hypocrisy with which he disguised them—Rodolphe had caused to be brought from her prison in Germany, a métisse Creole, the unworthy wife of the negro David.

Having arrived the evening previous, this creature, as handsome as she was perverted, as enchanting as she was dangerous, had received detailed instructions from the Baron de Graün.

It will be remembered that, in the last interview between Rodolphe and Madame Pipelet, the latter having adroitly proposed Cecily to Madame Séraphin to replace Louise Morel as servant to the notary, the housekeeper had willingly received her overtures, and promised to speak on the subject to Jacques Ferrand, which she had done in terms the most favourable to Cecily, the very same morning of the day on which she (Madame Séraphin) had been drowned at the island of the Ravageur.

Rodolphe came there to know the result of the presentation of Cecily.

To his great astonishment, on entering the lodge, he found, although it was eleven o'clock in the morning, M. Pipelet in bed and Anastasia standing beside him, offering him a drink.

Alfred, whose forehead and eyes disappeared under a formidable cotton cap, not answering Anastasia, she concluded he was asleep, and closed the curtains of the bed. On turning, she saw Rodolphe. Immediately she cried according to custom, the back of her left hand flat against her periwig.

"Your servant, my prince of lodgers. You find me overturned, amazed, grown thin. There are famous doings in the house. Without counting that Alfred is in bed since yesterday."

"And what is the matter?"

"Is that to be asked?" "How?"

"Always the same number. The monster yearns more and more after Alfred: he alarms me so that I do not know what more to do."

"Cabron again?" "Again."

"It is the devil, then!" "I shall begin to think so, Monsieur Rodolphe; for this *gredin* always guesses when I am out. Hardly do I turn on my heels than 'crac,' he is here on the back of my *vieux chéri*, who does not know how to defend himself any more than a child. Yesterday, again, while I was gone to M. Ferrand's, the notary—there is the place to hear news—"

"And Cécily?" said Rodolphe, hastily. "I came to know—"

"Stop, my prince of lodgers; do not fluster me. I have so many things—so many to tell you, that I shall lose myself if you break my thread."

"Come, I listen."

"In the first place, as concerns this house: just imagine that yesterday they came and arrested 'La Mère Burette.'"

"The pawnbroker on the second floor?"

"Mon Dieu, yes. It appears that she had many droll trades beside that of a pawnbroker! She was a *receleuse, haricandeuse, fondeuse, voleuse, allumeuse, engoûleuse, brocanteuse, friquetteuse*; in fine, everything that rhymes with *gueuse*.^{*} The worst of all is, that her old beau, M. Bras-Rouge, is also arrested. I told you there was a real earthquake in the house: what!"

"Bras-Rouge also arrested?"

"Yes; in his tavern in the Champs Elysées. All are boxed, even to his son Tortillard, the wicked little cripple. They say there has been a whole heap of murderers there; that they were a band of assassins; that La Chouette, one of the friends of La Mère Burette, has been strangled; and that, if help had not arrived in time, La Mère Mathieu, the diamond-broker, would have been murdered. Ain't this news?"

"Bras-Rouge arrested! La Chouette dead!" said Rodolphe to himself, with astonishment.

"Poor Fleur de Marie is at least avenged."

"So much for this. Without excepting the new infamy of Cabrion, I am going at once to finish with that brigand. You will see what impudence! When La Mère Burette was arrested, and we knew that Bras-Rouge, our principal tenant, was trapped, I said to the old darling, 'You must trot right off to the proprietor, and tell him that M. Bras-Rouge is locked up.' Alfred set out. At the end of two hours he came back to me, but in such a state—white as a sheet, and blowing like an ox!" "What was the matter?"

"You shall see, Monsieur Rodolphe. Figure to yourself that, at six steps from this, there is a large white wall: my '*vieux chéri*,' on leaving the house, looked by chance on this wall; what does he see written there with charcoal, in large letters? 'Pipelet—Cabrion!' the two names joined by a large mark of union. It is this mark of union with this scoundrel which sticks in his stomach the most, my old darling. Bon, that began to upset him; ten steps farther, what does he see on the great door of the Temple? 'Pipelet—Cabrion!' always with the sign of union. On he goes: at each step, Monsieur Rodolphe, he saw written these cursed names on the walls of the houses, on the doors, everywhere, 'Pipelet—Cabrion.' My '*vieux chéri*' began to see thirty-six candles; he thought every one was looking at him; he pulled his hat down to his nose, he was so much ashamed. He went on the boulevard, thinking that this '*gueux*' of a Cabrion had confined his indecencies to the Rue du Temple. Ah, well, yes! all along the boulevard, at each place where there was room to write, always '*Pipelet—Cabrion*,' to the death! Finally, the poor dear man arrived at the proprietor's so bewildered, that, after having stammered, stammered, and slammered for a quarter of an

hour, he could not understand one word of all that Alfred said; so he sent him back, calling him an old imbecile, and told him to send me to explain the thing. 'Bon!' Alfred retired, came back by another route, in order to avoid the names he had seen written on the walls. Ah, well, yes—"

"Pipelet and Cabrion again?"

"As you say, my prince of lodgers. In this way the poor dear man arrived, stupified, amazed, wishing to exile himself. He told me his story; I calmed him as I could. I left him, and went with Mademoiselle Cécily to the notary's. You think this is all? Oh, yes! Hardly was my back turned than this Cabrion, who had watched my departure, had the impudence to send here two great hussies, who put on Alfred's breeches. Stop! my hair stands on an end. I will tell you all this directly. Let us finish with the notary. I set out, then, in a coach with Mademoiselle Cécily, as you are advised. She wore her pretty German peasant's costume, 'as she had just arrived, and had not time to change it,' as I was to tell M. Ferrand. You will believe me, if you please, my prince of lodgers, I have seen many pretty girls; I have seen myself in my spring-time; but never have I seen (myself included) a young person who could come within a hundred pike-staffs of Cécily. She has, above all, in the look of her large, wicked, black eyes, something—something—in fine, I don't know what it is; but, for sure, there is something striking. What eyes!"

"In fine, hold! Alfred is not suspicious; well! the first time that she looked at him, he became as red as a carrot, this poor *vieux chéri*, and for nothing in the world; he would not have looked at the '*donzelle*' a second time—he wriggled on his chair for an hour afterward, as if he had been seated on a thorn; he told me afterward that the look of Mademoiselle Cécily had recalled to his mind all the histories of that impudent Bradamante about the *savagesses*, which made him blush so much, my old prude of an Alfred."

"But the notary? the notary?"

"Here I am, Monsieur Rodolphe. It was about seven o'clock in the evening when we reached the house of M. Ferrand; I told the porter to tell his master that Madame Pipelet was there with the servant whom Madame Séraphin had spoken about and told me to bring. Hereupon the porter uttered a sigh, and asked me if I knew what had happened to Madame Séraphin. I said no. Ah! Monsieur Rodolphe, here is another earthquake!" "What now?"

"The Séraphin is drowned in an excursion to the country which she had made with one of her relations."

"Drowned! A party to the country in winter?" said Rodolphe, surprised.

"Mon Dieu! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, drowned; as for me, it astonishes me more than it grieves me; for since the misfortune of poor Louise, whom she denounced, I hated her, the Séraphin. Thus, *ma foi*, I said to myself, 'She is drowned, ah well! she is drowned; after all, it won't kill me.' That's my character."

"And M. Ferrand?"

"The porter at first said he thought I could not see his master, and begged me to wait in the lodge, but at the end of a moment he returned for me; we crossed the court, and entered a chamber in the rez-de-chaussée."

"There was only a single candle burning. The notary was seated at the corner of the fire-

^{*} For many of these words there is no translation. They mean she was a thief-receiver, coiner, female broker, &c., &c. "Gueuse," a beggarly wretch.

place, where smoked the remains of a fire-brand. What a barrack! I had never seen M. Ferrand. Dieu de Dieu, isn't he horrid! Here is another one who might in vain have offered me the throne of Arabia to prove false to Alfred."

"And did he appear struck with the beauty of Cécily?"

"Can any one know, with his green spectacles? such an old sacristan ought to be no judge of women. Yet when we both entered, he made a kind of start from his chair; it was, doubtless, astonishment at seeing the Alsatian costume of Cécily; for she had (only ten million times better) the 'tournure' of one of those little broom girls, with her short petticoats, and her pretty legs with blue stockings and red clocks; 'saprastie!' what calves! and such slender ancles! and the little foot; finally, the notary had a bewildered look at seeing her."

"It was doubtless the strange costume which astonished him?" "Must think so; but the funny moment drew near. Happily, I remembered the maxim you taught me, Monsieur Rodolphe; it was my safety."

"What maxim?" "You know: *It is enough that one wishes that the other should not wish, or that one should not wish that the other wishes.*" Then I said to myself, I must rid my prince of lodgers of his German, in placing her with the master of Louise: pardieu! I am going to a sham, and this is what I said to the notary, without giving him time to draw breath:

"Pardon me, monsieur, if my niece comes dressed in the costume of her country; but she has just arrived; she has no other clothes than these, and I have no means of getting her others, as it would hardly be worth while; for we came on-ly to thank you for having said to Madame Seraphin that you would consent to see Cécily, from the good recommendations I had given her; but I do not think she can suit, monsieur."

"Very well, Madame Pipelet."

"Why will your niece not suit me?" said the notary, who, seated in the chimney corner, seemed to look at us from under his spectacles.

"Because Cécily begins to be home-sick, monsieur. She has only been here three days, yet she wishes to return, even if she has to beg her way back, and sell brooms like her country-women."

"And you, who are her relation, will not suffer this?"

"Dame, monsieur, I am her relation, it is true; but she is an orphan; she is twenty years old, and she is mistress of her own actions."

"Bah! bah! mistress of her own actions; at her age she should obey her relations," answered he, roughly.

"Hereupon Cécily began to cry and tremble, pressing against me; it was the notary who made her afraid, very sure."

"And Jacques Ferrand?"

"He grumbled and muttered."

"Abandon a girl at her age is to wish to ruin her! To return to Germany as a beggar, fine resource! And you, her aunt, you allow such conduct?"

"Well, well, said I to myself, you'll walk alone, 'grigon.' I'll place Cécily with you, or I'll lose my name."

"I am her aunt, it is true," answered I, "and it is a very unfortunate relationship for me; I have enough on my hands; I would be just as well pleased to have my niece go away as to have her on my hands. May the devil run away with

such relations who send you such great girls as this without paying the postage!" To crown all, there was Cécily, who seemed to be up to trap, bursting into tears. Thereupon the notary assumed a snivelling tone like a preacher, and said to me,

"You will have to account to God for the trust that Providence has placed in your hands; it would be a crime to expose this young girl to perdition. I consent to aid you in your charitable work, if your niece promises me to be industrious, honest, and pious, and, above all, never to go out. I will have pity on her, and take her in my service."

"No, no, I would rather go back to my country," said Cécily, still weeping."

"Her dangerous duplicity did not fail her," thought Rodolphe; "the diabolical creature has, I see, perfectly comprised the orders of the Baron de Graun." Then the prince said aloud, "Did M. Ferrand appear vexed at the perverseness of Cécily?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; he muttered between his teeth, and said to her hastily,

"It is not a question, mademoiselle, of what you prefer, but of what is suitable and decent; Heaven will not abandon you, if you lead an honest life and fulfil your religious duties. You will be here in a house as severe as holy; if your aunt really loves you, she will profit by my offer; at first you will have but small wages, but if by your conduct and zeal you deserve more, perhaps I will increase them."

"Good! thought I to myself; the notary is caught! here is Cécily fixed at your house, old miser, old *no-heart!* The Séraphin was in your service for many years, and you have not even the appearance of remembering that she was drowned the day before yesterday. And I said aloud:

"Doubtless, monsieur, the place is advantageous, but if this young woman is home-sick?"

"That will pass away," answered the notary; "come, do you decide—yes or no? If you consent, bring your niece to-morrow night at this hour, and she can enter at once into my service—my porter will instruct her. As to the wages, I commence by giving her twenty francs a month and board and lodging."

"Ah! monsieur, you'll add five francs more?"

"No, by-and-by—if I am content—we shall see. But I must inform you, that your niece must never go out, and must have no one to come and see her."

"Eh! mon Dieu, monsieur, who would come to see her? she knows no one but me in Paris, and I have my door to take care of; it has incommoded me enough to come with her to-day—you will never see me again—she will be as much of a stranger as if she had never come out of her own country. As to her not going out, there is a very simple way; let her wear her own costume; she would never dare go out in the streets dressed in that manner."

"You are right," said the notary; "it is, besides, respectable to dress in the costume of one's country. She shall, then, remain in her Alsatian dress."

"Come," said I to Cécily, who, with her head down, wept continually, "you must decide, my child; a good place, in an honest house, is not to be found every day; and, besides, if you refuse, make your own arrangements; I'll have no more to do with them."

"Then Cécily answered, sighing, 'that she

consented to remain, but on condition that if in a fortnight her home-sickness troubled her too much, she might go away.

"I do not wish to keep you by force," said the notary; "and I am not embarrassed to find servants. Here is your advance; your aunt will only have to bring you to-morrow night."

"Cécily had not ceased to weep. I accepted for her the advance of forty sous from the old screw, and we returned here."

"Very well, Madame Pipelet! I do not forget my promise; here is what I promised if you should succeed in placing this girl, who embarrassed me." "Wait until to-morrow, my prince of lodgers," said Madame Pipelet, refusing the money; "for, perhaps, he will change his mind when I take Cécily to him this evening."

"I do not think that he will change his mind; but where is she?"

"In the cabinet belonging to the apartments of the commandant, in obedience to your orders, she does not stir from them; she seems as resigned as a lamb, although she has eyes—ah! what eyes! But, apropos of the commandant, isn't he an intriguer! When he came himself to superintend the packing of his furniture, did he not tell me that if there came any letters here addressed to a *Madame Vincent*, they were for him, and to send them to the *Rue Mondovi, No. 5*? He causes himself to be addressed under the name of a woman, the beautiful bird! how cunning it is! But this is not all; did he not have the impudence to ask me what had become of his wood! 'Your wood! why not your forest at once?' I answered. Now, it is true, for two mean cart-loads of nothing at all—one of drift, and the other new wood, for he did not buy all new wood—the save-penny made a fuss! His wood? 'I burned all your wood,' said I, 'to save your furniture from the damp; otherwise mushrooms would have sprung up on your embroidered cap, and on your glow-worm robe de chambre that you wore so often to see the 'Roi de Prusse,' while you were waiting for the little lady who quizzed you.'

A heavy and plaintive groan from Alfred interrupted Madame Pipelet. "There is the vieux chéri dreaming; he is going to wake up; you will allow me, my prince of lodgers?" "Certainly; I have, besides, some more questions to ask."

"Well! vieux chéri, how do you feel?" said Madame Pipelet to her husband, opening the curtains; "here is Monsieur Rodolphe; he knows the new infamy of Cabrion; he pities you with all his heart."

"Ah! monsieur," said Alfred, turning his head in a languishing manner towards Rodolphe; "this time I shall not get over it; the monster has stabbed me to the heart. I am the subject of the placards of the capital; my name can be read on all the walls of the capital, side by side with this scoundrel's: *Pipelet—Cabrion*, with an enormous sign of union—monsieur, a sign of union. I!! united to this infernal blackguard in the eyes of the capital of Europe!"

"M. Rodolphe knows it; but what he does not know is your adventure of last night with these two strapping women." "Ah! monsieur, he kept his most monstrous infamy for the last; this passed all bounds," said Alfred, in a mournful tone.

"Come, my dear Monsieur Pipelet, relate to me this new misfortune."

"All he had done previously was nothing to

this, monsieur. He succeeded in his object—thanks to proceedings the most shameful. I do not know if I have the strength to relate; confusion, shame will impede me at each step."

M. Pipelet being painfully raised in the bed, modestly buttoned up his flannel waistcoat, and commenced in these terms: "My wife had just gone out; absorbed in the bitterness caused by the prostitution of my name written on all the walls of the capital, I sought to distract myself by endeavouring to sole a boot, twenty times taken up and twenty times abandoned, thanks to the obstinate persecutions of my tormentor. I was seated before a table, when I saw the door of my lodge open, and a woman enter. This woman was wrapped in a cloak, with a hood. I arose politely from my seat, and touched my hat. At this moment, a second woman, also enveloped in a cloak with a hood, entered my lodge, and locked the door inside."

"Although astonished at the familiarity of this procedure, and the silence which the two women preserved, I again rose from the chair, and again carried my hand to my hat. Then, monsieur—no, no, I never can—my modesty revolts."

"Come, old modesty, we are among men; go on, then." "Then," resumed Alfred, becoming crimson, "the mantles fell, and what did I see? Two species of sirens or nymphs, with no other clothing than a tunic of leaves, the head also crowned with foliage; I was petrified. Then they both advanced towards me, extending their arms, as if to engage me to precipitate myself into them!"

"The husseys!" said Anastasia.

"The advances of these barefaced individuals revolted me," resumed Alfred, animated by a chaste indignation; "and, following this habit, which never abandons me in the most critical circumstances of my life, I remained completely immovable on my chair; then, profiting by my stupor, the two sirens approached me in a kind of slow movement, spinning round on their legs, and moving their arms. I became more and more immovable. They reached me; they twisted their arms around me."

"Twisted their arms around an aged and married man, the 'gredines!' Ah! if I had been there, with the handle of my broom," cried Anastasia, "I'd have given you a cadence, and spinning of legs to some purpose, 'gourgandines!'"

"When I felt myself embraced," continued Alfred, "my blood made one rush—was half dead. Then one of the sirens—the boldest, a large tall blonde—leaned on my shoulder, raised my hat, and uncovered my head, always, 'en cadence,' spinning on her legs and moving her arms: then her accomplice drew a pair of scissors from among the leaves, collected together an enormous lock of all the hair that remained behind my head, and cut it off. Monsieur, all—all; always with the spinning around on her legs; then she said to me, singing 'en cadence,' 'It is for Cabrion,' and the other impudence repeated in chorus, 'It is for Cabrion! it is for Cabrion!'"

After a pause, accompanied by a grievous sigh, Alfred went on with his story:

"During this scandalous spoliation, I raised my eyes, and saw looking through the window of the lodge the infernal face of Cabrion, with his beard and pointed hat. He laughed, and laughed; he was hideous. To escape this odi-

ous vision; I shut my eyes. When I opened them again, all had disappeared. I found myself on my chair, my head uncovered, and completely devastated! You see, monsieur, Gabrion has gained his end by force of cunning, audacity, and obstinacy; and by what means, mon Dieu! He wished to make me pass for his friend! he began by putting up a notice here that we would carry on a friendly trade together. Not content with that, at this very moment my name is stuck with his on all the walls of the capital, with an enormous sign of union. There is not, at this moment, an inhabitant of Paris who can have any doubt of my intimacy with this wretch: he wished some of my hair, he has it; all thanks to the impudent exactions of these brazen sirens. Now, monsieur, you must see, there only remains for me to leave France—*ma belle France!* where I thought to live and die." And Alfred threw himself backward on his bed, and clasped his hands.

"But just the contrary, *'vieux chéri'*; now that he has your hair, he will leave you quiet."

"Leave me quiet!" cried M. Pipelet, with a convulsive start; "but you do not know him; he is insatiable. Now, who knows what he will want from me?"

Rigolette, appearing at the entrance of the lodge, put an end to the lamentations of M. Pipelet.

"Do not enter, mademoiselle!" cried M. Pipelet, faithful to his habits of chaste susceptibility. "I am in bed, and in my linen." So saying, he drew one of the sheets to his chin. Rigolette stopped discreetly at the threshold.

"I was just going to see you, my neighbour," said Rodolphe to her. "Will you wait one moment?" Then, addressing Anastasia, "Do not forget to conduct Cécily to-night to M. Ferrand's."

"Be tranquil, my prince of lodgers; at seven o'clock she shall be installed there. Now that Madame Morel can walk, I will ask her to stay in the lodge, for Alfred would not, for an empire, remain alone."

CHAPTER XII.

VOISIN ET VOISINE.

THE rosy cheeks of Rigolette became paler and paler; her charming face, until now so fresh, so round, began to lengthen a little; her piquant countenance, ordinarily so animated, so lively, was become serious and still more sad since the last interview between the grisette and Fleur de Marie at the gate of the prison of Saint Lazare.

"How happy I am to see you, my neighbour!" said she to Rodolphe, when he came out of the lodge. "I have many things to tell you, *'allez.'*"

"In the first place, *'ma voisine'*, how do you do? Let me look at your pretty face. Is it always rosy and gay? Alas! no; I find you pale. I am sure you work too much." "Oh! no, Monsieur Rodolphe; I assure you I am now used to this little increase of work. What changes me is grief. Mon Dieu, yes! Every time I see poor Germain I become still more sad." "He is, then, very much depressed?" "More than ever, Monsieur Rodolphe; and what is annoying is, that everything that I do to console him increases his despondency; it is like a spell." And her face came and obscured

the large black eyes of Rigolette. "Explain this to me, *'ma voisine.'*" "For instance, yesterday I went to see him to take a book he wished to have, because it was a romance that we used to read together in our happy days. At the sight of this book, he burst into tears; that did not surprise me; it was very natural. Dame! this *'souvenir'* of our evenings, so quiet, so pleasant, seated by my stove, in my snug little room, to compare that with his frightful life in prison—poor Germain! it is very cruel."

"Be comforted," said Rodolphe to the young girl. "When Germain gets out of prison, and his innocence is acknowledged, he will find his mother and friends, and he will soon forget, in their society and yours, the terrible moments of trial." "Yes, but until then, Monsieur Rodolphe, he is going to be still more tormented. And, besides, this is not all."

"What is there besides?"

"As he is the only honest man among all these bandits, they are prejudiced against him, because he cannot agree with them. The guardian of the *'parloir'*, a very good man, told me to advise Germain, for his own sake, to be less proud, to try to be a little more familiar with the men; but he cannot. They are stronger than he is, and I fear that some day they will injure him." Then suddenly interrupting herself, she said, drying her tears, "But see, now, I only think of myself, and forget to speak to you about La Goualeuse."

"La Goualeuse?" said Rodolphe, with surprise.

"The day before yesterday, on going to see Louise at Saint Lazare, I met her."

"The Goualeuse?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe." "At Saint Lazare?" "She came out with an old lady."

"It is impossible!" cried Rodolphe, astonished.

"I assure you it was she, *'mon voisin.'*"

"You must be mistaken."

"No, no; although she was dressed as a peasant girl, I knew her at once. She is still very handsome, although pale; and she has the same soft, melancholy manner as formerly."

"She has come to Paris without my knowledge! I cannot believe it. And what was she doing at Saint Lazare?" "The same as I was; visiting a prisoner, doubtless. I had not the time to ask more questions, the old woman who accompanied her had such a cross look, and was in such a hurry. Thus you know La Goualeuse also, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Certainly." "Then there is no more doubt that it is you of whom she spoke." "Of me?"

"Yes, *'mon voisin.'* Just imagine that I related to her the misfortunes of Louise and Germain, both so good, so virtuous, and so persecuted by this villain Jacques Ferrand, taking care not to tell what you forbid, that you interested yourself in them; then La Goualeuse told me that if a generous person whom she knew was informed of the unhappy and undeserved fate of my poor prisoners, he would certainly come to their assistance. I asked the name of this person, and she named you, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"It is she, it is she."

"You may suppose that we were both much astonished at this discovery, or this resemblance of names. Thus we have promised to write if our Rodolphe was the same person. And it appears that you are the same, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Yes, I have also interested myself for this

poor child. But what you have told me of her presence in Paris surprises me so much, that if you had not given me so many details of your interview with her, I should have persisted in believing that you were mistaken. But, adieu, 'ma voisine'; what you have just told me about La Goualeuse obliges me to leave you. Remain always as reserved towards Louise and Germain as regards the protection of unknown friends. This secrecy is more necessary than ever. Apropos, how are the Morel family?"

"Better and better, Monsieur Rodolphe. The mother is on her feet again; the children improve daily. All owe their life to your—their happiness. You are so generous to them!" "And poor Morel, how is he?" "Better. I had news from him yesterday. He seems occasionally to have some lucid moments; there is great hope of restoring him to reason." "Come, courage, 'ma voisine'; I shall soon see you again. Have you need of anything? Do you still earn enough to support yourself?" "Oh! yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; I take a little from my hours of rest, and it is not much damage, allez, for I hardly sleep now." "Alas! my poor little neighbour, I much fear that *Papa Créu* and *Ramonette* will not sing much more if they wait for you to begin."

"You are not mistaken, Monsieur Rodolphe; my birds and I sing no more, mon Dieu, no; but, now you are going to laugh! well, it seems to me that they comprehend that I am sad; yes, instead of warbling gayly when I arrive, they utter such low, plaintive notes, that they appear to wish to console me. I am foolish to believe this, am I not, Monsieur Rodolphe?" "Not at all; I am sure that your good friends, the birds, love you too much not to perceive your sorrow."

"Really, these poor little things are so intelligent!" said Rigolette, naively, much satisfied to be assured of the sagacity of the companions of her solitude.

"Without doubt, nothing is more intelligent than gratitude. Come, once more, adieu. Soon, my neighbour, I hope your pretty eyes will become sparkling, your cheeks very rosy, and your songs so gay—so gay—that *Papa Créu* and *Ramonette* will hardly be able to follow you." "May what you have said be true, Monsieur Rodolphe," answered Rigolette, with a heavy sigh. "Well, adieu, 'mon voisin.'"

"Adieu, ma voisine, et à bientôt."

Rodolphe could not comprehend how Madame Georges had, without advising him, sent or brought *Fleur de Marie* to Paris; he returned home, to send an express to the farm of Bouqueval. At the moment he entered the Rue du Plumet he saw a postchaise stop before the door of the hotel; it was Murph, who had just returned from Normandy. The squire had gone there, as we have stated, to unmask the sinister projects of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville, and Bradamanti, her accomplice.

CHAPTER XIII.

MURPH AND POLIDORI.

The face of Sir Walter Murph was radiant with joy. On descending from the carriage, he handed to one of the servants of the prince a pair

of pistols, took off his long riding-coat, and, without taking time to change his dress, he followed Rodolphe, who, very impatient, had preceded him to his apartment.

"Good news, monseigneur, good news!" cried the squire, when he found himself alone with Rodolphe. "The wretches are unmasked! M. d'Orbigny is saved! You sent me off in time; one hour later, a new crime had been committed." "And Madame d'Harville?"

"She is overjoyed at regaining her father's affection, and at having arrived in time, thanks to your advice, to save him from certain death!" "Thus Polidori—"

"Was once more the worthy accomplice of the stepmother of Madame d'Harville. But what a monster this stepmother! what 'sang-froid'! what audacity! And Polidori! Ah! monseigneur, you have often been pleased to thank me for what you call the proofs of my devotedness."

"I have always had proofs of your friendship, my good Murph."

"Well, monseigneur, never—no, never has this friendship been put to a severer test than in this affair," said the squire, in a half-joking manner.

"How is that?"

"The disguises of the coalman, the peregrinations in the city, and *tutti quanti* were nothing, monseigneur, absolutely nothing, compared to the journey I have just made with this infernal Polidori."

"What do you say? Polidori—"

"I have brought him with me."

"With you?" "With me. Judge what a companion! during twelve hours, side by side with the man I despise and hate the most in the world! I would as soon travel with a serpent; my antipathy—" "And where is Polidori now?"

"In the house of the Allée des Veuves, under good and sure guard." "Did he make no resistance to follow you?"

"None. I left him the choice to be arrested on the spot by the French authorities, or to be my prisoner in the Allée des Veuves. He did not hesitate."

"You were right; it is better to have him thus in our own hands. You are a man of gold, my old Murph; but relate to me your journey; I am impatient to know how this unworthy woman and her depraved accomplice have been unmasked."

"Nothing could be plainer. I had only to follow your instructions to the letter to terrify and crush these wretches. In this case, monseigneur, you have saved, as usual, people of worth, and punished the wicked; noble Providence that you are!" "Sir Walter Murph! Sir Walter, do you remember the flatteries of the Baron de Grain?" said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Well, let it pass, monseigneur. I will commence, then; or, rather, you will first please to read this letter, from Madame la Marquise d'Harville, who will inform you of all that occurred previous to my arrival."

"A letter? give it to me quickly."

Murph, handing Rodolphe the letter of the marquise, added, "Thus, as it was agreed upon, instead of accompanying the marquise to her father's, I alighted at an inn, serving as a kind of watering-place, at a short distance from the château, where I was to stay until Madame la Marquise sent for me."

Rodolphe read what followed with tender and impatient solicitude:

"Monseigneur,

"After all I owe you already, I shall owe you the life of my father!

"I shall let facts speak for themselves; they will tell you better than I can what new treasures of gratitude towards you I have collected in my heart.

"Comprehending all the importance of the counsels which you gave me through Sir Walter Murph, who rejoined me on the road to Normandy, just as I left Paris, I arrived in all haste at the Château des Aubiers.

"I do not know why, the features of the servants who received me appeared sinister; I did not see among them any of the old servitors of our house; no one knew me; I was obliged to announce myself. I learned that, for some days past, my father was quite ill, and that my stepmother had just returned from Paris with a physician.

"No more doubt—it was Doctor Polidori!

"Wishing to be conducted at once to my father, I asked where an old valet de chambre was, to whom he was much attached. This man had left the château some time before; this information was given me by an intendant, who had conducted me to my apartments, saying that he would go and inform my stepmother of my arrival.

"Was it an illusion—prejudice? it seemed to me that my arrival was disagreeable even to the servants of my father. Everything in the château seemed mournful and sad. In the disposition of mind in which I found myself, one seeks to draw conclusions from the merest trifles. I remarked everywhere traces of disorder, of negligence, as if it had been thought useless to take care of a dwelling so soon to be abandoned.

"My inquietudes, my anxieties increased at each moment. After having settled my daughter and her 'gouvernante' in my apartment, I was about to go to my father, when my stepmother entered.

"Notwithstanding her duplicity—notwithstanding the command which she ordinarily has over herself, she appeared uneasy at my arrival.

"M. d'Orbigny did not expect your visit, madame," said she to me. "He is so ill, that such a surprise might be fatal. I think it, then, suitable to leave him in ignorance of your presence; he cannot, in any way—"

"I did not allow her to finish.

"A great misfortune has happened, madame," said I; "M. d'Harville is dead! victim of a fatal imprudence! After such a deplorable event, I cannot remain in Paris, and I have come to pass at my father's my first mourning."

"You are a widow! Ah! what overpowering good fortune!" cried my stepmother, in a rage.

"From what you know of the unhappy marriage which this woman schemed for me, you will comprehend, monseigneur, the atrocity of her exclamation.

"It is because I feared that you would be also as *overpoweringly fortunate* as I am, madame, that I came here," said I, perhaps imprudently: "I wish to see my father."

"This is impossible," said she, turning pale: "the sight of you might cause a dangerous attack."

"Since my father is so dangerously ill," cried I, "why was I not informed of it?"

"Such were the commands of M. d'Orbigny," answered my stepmother.

"I do not believe you, madame, and I am go-

ing to assure myself of the truth," said I, making a step towards the door.

"I repeat to you that your unexpected appearance may do your father much harm," cried she, placing herself before me, to bar the passage. "I will not allow you to enter his chamber until I have informed him of your return, with all the precautions his situation requires."

"I was in a state of cruel perplexity, monseigneur. A sudden surprise might, in effect, prove dangerous to my father; but this woman, ordinarily so cold, so much the mistress of herself, seemed so alarmed at my presence; I had so many reasons to doubt the sincerity of her solicitude for the health of him whom she had married from cupidity; finally, the presence of Doctor Polidori, the murderer of my mother, caused a terror so great, that, believing the life of my father to be threatened, I did not hesitate between the hope of saving him and the fear of causing him any serious emotions.

"I will see my father at once," said I to my stepmother.

"And although she caught me by the arms, I passed out.

"Losing her self-possession completely, this woman again endeavoured to stop me. This incredible resistance redoubled my alarm. I disengaged myself from her hands. Knowing the apartment of my father, I ran thither rapidly; I entered. Oh! monseigneur! on my life, I shall never forget the scene presented to my view. My father, almost unrecognisable, pale, thin, suffering painted on every feature, with his head leaning on a pillow, was stretched out in a large arm-chair.

"At the corner of the chimneypiece, standing near him, was Doctor Polidori, prepared to pour in a cup, which a nurse presented to him, some drops of a liquid contained in a little flask of crystal which he held in his hand.

"His long red beard gave a still more sinister expression to his face. I entered so precipitately that he made a gesture of surprise, exchanged a look of intelligence with my stepmother, who followed in haste, and instead of giving my father the potion which he had prepared for him, he quickly placed it on the chimneypiece.

"Guided by an instinct which I cannot yet account for, my first movement was to seize the flask.

"Remarking the surprise and alarm of my stepmother and Polidori, I felicitated myself on my action. My father, stupefied, seemed irritated at seeing me; I expected it. Polidori cast a ferocious glance at me; notwithstanding the presence of my father and that of the nurse, I feared that this wretch, seeing his crime almost discovered, would carry matters to extremities.

"I felt the need of help at this decisive moment; I rang the bell; one of the servants appeared; I begged him to say to my valet de chambre (who had his instructions) to go and bring some things I had left at the inn; Sir Walter Murph knew that, not to arouse the suspicions of my stepmother, I would employ this subterfuge to bring him to me.

"The surprise of my father, of my stepmother was such, that the servant retired before they could say a word; I was reassured; in a few moments Sir Walter would be near me.

"What does this mean?" said my father, at length, in a feeble but imperious and angry tone. "You here, Clémence, without being sent for?"

And then, hardly arrived, you take possession of the flacon which contains the potion that the doctor was about to give me; will you explain this folly?"

"Leave the room," said my stepmother to the nurse.

"Calm yourself, my friend," said she, addressing my father; "you know the least emotion may injure you. Since your daughter comes here in spite of you, and her presence is disagreeable, give me your arm, I will conduct you to the little saloon; and leave our good doctor to make Madame d'Harville understand the imprudence (not to say anything worse) of her conduct."

"And she cast a significant look at her accomplice. I comprehended the design of my stepmother. She wished to lead my father away and leave me alone with Polidori, who, in this extreme case, would have doubtless employed violence to force from me the flacon, which might furnish an evident proof of his designs. 'You are right,' said my father; 'since she comes, and persecutes me even in my own room, without any respect for my wishes, I will leave the place free to her importunity.' And rising with an effort, he accepted the offered arm, and made some steps towards the small saloon."

"At this moment, Polidori advancing towards me, I drew nearer my father, and said,

"I will explain to you the cause of my unexpected arrival and what is strange in my conduct. Since yesterday I am a widow; since yesterday I know your days are threatened, my father."

"He walked painfully, with his body bent. At these words, he stopped, stood erect, and looking at me with profound astonishment, cried, 'You a widow? my days threatened? What does all this mean?'

"And who dares to threaten the days of M. d'Orbigy, madame?" audaciously asked my stepmother.

"Who threatens them?" added Polidori.

"You, monsieur; you, madame," I answered.

"What an outrage!" cried my stepmother, advancing towards me. "What I say I will prove, madame."

"Such an accusation is frightful!" said my father.

"I shall leave this house at once, since in it I am exposed to such atrocious calumnies!" said Doctor Polidori, with the assumed indignation of a man whose honour was outraged. Beginning to feel the danger of his position, he doubtless wished to fly. As he opened the door, he found himself face to face with Sir Walter Murph."

Rodolphe, stopping a moment, extended his hand to the squire, and said, "Very well, my old friend; your presence must have been like a thunderbolt to this wretch."

"That is the word, monseigneur; he became livid, and retreated two steps, looking at me in a kind of stupor; he seemed annihilated. To meet me in Normandy at such a moment! he thought it was a dream. But continue, monseigneur; you will see that this infernal Comtesse d'Orbigy had also her turn of a *thunderbolt*, thanks to what you told me of her visit to the quack Bradamanti Polidori in the house of the Rue du Temple; for, after all, it is you who act; or, rather, I was only the instrument of your thought."

Rodolphe smiled, and went on with the perusal of the letter of Madame d'Harville.

"At the sight of Sir Walter, Polidori was petrified; my stepmother fell from one surprise into another; my father, alarmed at this scene, and weakened by sickness, was obliged to seat himself in a chair. Sir Walter double locked the door by which he entered; and, placing himself before the one which opened into another apartment, so that the doctor could not escape, he said to my father, with the most profound respect,

"I ask a thousand pardons, Monsieur le Comte, for the liberty I take; but imperious necessity, dictated solely by your interest (and you will soon acknowledge it), obliges me to act thus. My name is Sir Walter Murph, as this wretch can testify, who, at my sight, trembles with fear; I am the confidential adviser of his Royal Highness the reigning Grand-duke of Gérolstein."

"It is true," said Doctor Polidori, confusedly, quite beside himself with alarm.

"But then, monsieur, what do you come here for? what do you want?"

"Sir Walter Murph," said I, addressing my father, "comes to aid me in unmasking these wretches, to whose machinations you were near falling a victim."

"Then, handing to Sir Walter the crystal flacon, I added, 'I have had the good fortune to become possessed of this. At the moment Doctor Polidori was about administering to my father its contents.'

"A chemist from the neighbouring town shall analyze before you the contents of this bottle, which I am going to place in your hands, Monsieur le Comte, and if it be proved that it contains a slow and certain poison," said Sir Walter to my father, "there can remain no more doubt of the danger you have run, and which the affection of madame, your daughter, has happily prevented."

"My poor father looked at his wife, Doctor Polidori, Sir Walter, and myself in a bewildered manner; his features expressed deep agony. I read upon his care-worn face the violent struggle which tore his heart. Without doubt he was resisting with all his strength growing and terrible suspicions, fearing to be obliged to recognise the guilt of my stepmother; at length, concealing his face in his hands, he cried, 'Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu! all this is horrible—impossible! Is this, then, a dream?'

"No, it is not a dream!" cried my stepmother, audaciously: "nothing is more real than this atrocious calumny, previously concocted, to ruin an unhappy woman, whose sole crime has been to consecrate her life to you. Come, come, my friend! let us not remain a second longer here!" added she, addressing herself to my father; "perhaps your daughter will not have the insolence to detain you in spite of yourself."

"Yes, yes, let us go," said my father, almost wild; "all this is not true—cannot be true: I wish to hear nothing farther; my reason would give way; frightful suspicions would arise in my mind, empoison the few days remaining for me to live, and nothing could console me for such an abominable discovery!"

"My father seemed so suffering, so despairing, that at any sacrifice I would have put a stop to a scene so cruel for him. Sir Walter divined my thoughts; but, wishing to do full and entire justice, he answered my father,

"Yet a few words, Monsieur le Comte: you are about to experience the affliction, doubtless very painful, of discovering that a woman whom you believe attached to you by gratitude, has always been a monstrous hypocrite; but you will find certain consolation in the affection of your daughter, who has always been true."

"This passes all bounds!" cried my stepmother, in a rage; "and by what right, monsieur, and on what proofs, dare you to utter such frightful calumnies? You say this flacon contains poison. I deny it, monsieur; and I will deny it until you prove the contrary; and even if Doctor Polidori might have by accident mistaken one medicine for another, is that a reason to dare to accuse me of having wished, with him as an accomplice—oh! no, no, I cannot finish—an idea so horrible is already a crime. Once more, monsieur, I defy you to say on what proofs you and madame dare to sustain this frightful calumny," said my stepmother, with incredible audacity.

"Yes, on what proofs?" cried my unfortunate father. "The torture I suffer must be brought to a close."

"I have not come here without proofs, Monsieur le Comte," said Sir Walter. "And these proofs the answers of this wretch will furnish directly." Then Sir Walter spoke to Doctor Polidori in German, who seemed to have recovered a little assurance, but lost it immediately.

"What did you say to him?" demanded Rodolphe, laying aside the letter for a moment.

"Some significant words, monseigneur, to this effect: 'You have escaped by flight the sentence pronounced against you in the grand-duchy; you live in the Rue du Temple, under the false name of Bradamanti; your present occupation is unknown; you poisoned the comte's first wife; three days ago Madame d'Orbigny came to bring you here to poison her husband. His royal highness is in Paris, and has the proofs of all I advance. If you confess the truth, so as to convict this miserable woman, you may hope, not pardon, but some mitigation of the punishment you deserve; you will follow me to Paris, where I will place you in security until his royal highness decides your fate. Otherwise two things: the one is, that the prince will demand you from the government, or this moment I will send to the neighbouring town for a magistrate; this flacon, containing poison, shall be placed in his hands; you will be arrested at once, your lodgings in the Rue du Temple searched; you know how much this will compromise you, and French justice shall follow its course. Choose, then.' These revelations, these accusations, these threats, that he knew well founded, succeeding one another so rapidly, confounded this miscreant, who did not expect to find me so well informed. In the hope to lessen the punishment which awaited him, he did not hesitate to sacrifice his accomplice, and answered, 'Interrogate me—I will tell the truth concerning this woman.'"

"Well, well, my worthy Murph, I expected no less from you." "During my interview with Polidori, the features of Madame d'Orbigny changed their expression of assurance alarmingly, although she did not understand German. She saw, from the increasing dejection of her confederate, from his supplicating attitude, that I had him in my power. In great anxiety, she endeavoured to catch the eye of Polidori, in order to give him courage or to implore his discretion, but he avoided her glances." "And the comte?"

"His emotion was indescribable; with his contracted fingers he clutched, convulsively, the arm of his chair, the perspiration standing on his forehead; he hardly breathed; his burning and glazed eyes were fixed on mine; his agony equalled that of his wife. The continuation of the letter of Madame d'Harville will instruct you as to the end of this painful scene, monseigneur."

CHAPTER XIV.

PUNISHMENT.

RODOLPHE resumed the perusal of the letter of Madame d'Harville. "After a conversation in German, which lasted for some moments," Sir Walter said to Polidori, "Now answer: Was it not madame," and he pointed at my stepmother, "who, at the time of the illness of the first wife of M. la Comte, introduced you in the house as a physician?"

"Yes; it was she," answered Polidori.

"In order to serve the fearful projects of madame, have you not been criminal enough to render mortal (by your homicidal prescriptions) the slight illness of Madame le Comtesse d'Orbigny?"

"Yes," said Polidori.

"My father uttered a heart-rending sigh, raised his two hands towards heaven, and let them fall, quite overwhelmed. 'Falsehoods and infamy!' cried my stepmother: 'all this is false; they conspire to ruin me!' 'Silence, madame!' said Sir Walter Murph, in an imposing voice; then, continuing to question Polidori,

"Is it true that, three days ago, madame went to seek you at No. 17, Rue du Temple, where you reside, concealed under the false name of Bradamanti?"

"That is true."

"Did not madame propose to you to come here to murder the Comte d'Orbigny, as you had murdered his wife?"

"Alas! I cannot deny it," said Polidori.

"At this overwhelming revelation, my father arose on his feet; he showed the door to my stepmother; then, extending his arms towards me, he cried, in a broken voice, 'In the name of your unfortunate mother, pardon me, pardon me! I have caused you much suffering; but I swear to you I was a stranger to the crime which has conducted her to the tomb.'

"And, before I could prevent him, he fell at my feet."

"When Sir Walter and myself raised him, he had fainted. I rang for the servants. Sir Walter took the doctor by the arm and went out with him, saying to my stepmother, 'Believe me, madame, you had better leave this house before an hour, or I will deliver you up to justice.'

"The wretched woman left the room in a state of alarm and rage, which you will easily conceive, monseigneur."

"When my father recovered his senses, all that had taken place appeared like a horrid dream. I was under the sad necessity of relating to him my first suspicions concerning the premature death of my mother—suspicions which your knowledge of the previous crimes of Doctor Polidori, monseigneur, changed into certainty."

"I was obliged, also, to tell my father how my stepmother had carried her hatred even to my marriage, and what had been her object in causing me to marry M. d'Harville."

"As much as my father had shown himself weak and blind respecting this woman, just so much he wished to treat her without mercy; he accused himself, with despair, of having been the accomplice of this monster, in giving her his hand after the death of my mother; he wished to give her up to justice; I represented to him the odious notoriety of such proceedings. I engaged him to drive her away forever from his presence, allowing her just enough for her support, since she bore his name."

"I had great trouble in procuring my father's consent to this; he wished me to turn her out of the house. This mission would be doubly painful; I thought that Sir Walter, perhaps, would act for me. He consented."

"And I, 'pardieu,' consented with joy, monseigneur," said Murph to Rodolphe; "nothing pleases me more than to give to the wicked this kind of extreme unction." "And what did this woman say?"

"Madame d'Harville had, in effect, carried her goodness so far as to ask from her father a pension of one hundred Louis for this creature. This appeared to me, not goodness, but weakness; it was bad enough to rob justice of such a dangerous woman. I went to find the comte; he coincided entirely with me; it was agreed that we should give, in all, twenty-five Louis to the infamous wretch, so that she might subsist until she found employment. 'And what kind of employment can the Comtesse d'Orbigny find?' demanded she, insolently. 'Ma foi, it is your affair; you might be something like a nurse or house-keeper; but, believe me, seek the most humble and obscure calling; for if you have the audacity to tell your name, this name which you owe to a crime, people will be astonished to see the Comtesse d'Orbigny reduced to such a condition; they will inquire, and you can judge of the consequences, if you are fool enough to noise abroad the past. Conceal your name in some distant place; cause yourself to be forgotten; become Madame Pierre or Madame Jacques, and repent—if you can.' 'And you think, monsieur,' said she to me, 'that I shall not claim the advantages secured to me by my marriage contract?' 'Certainly, madame, nothing can be more just; it would be unworthy of M. d'Orbigny not to execute his promises, and not to recognise all that you have done for him, and all you would have done. Sue, sue; address yourself to justice; I have no doubt the decision will be against your husband.' A quarter of an hour after our conversation, the creature was on the road to the neighbouring town."

"You are right: it is painful to allow such a woman to escape with impunity; but the scandal of such a trial for this old man, already so much debilitated, it must not be thought of."

"I have easily persuaded my father to leave Les Aubiers to-day," resumed Rodolphe, continuing to read the letter from Madame d'Harville: "too many sad recollections attend him here; although his health is delicate, the journey and change of air may be of service, as the physician says who has taken the place of Doctor Polidori. My father wished that he should analyze the contents of the flacon, without informing him of what had passed; he answered that he could only do this at his own house, but that in two hours we should know the result. This was, that several doses of this liquid, prepared with infernal skill, would, in a given time, produce death without leaving any traces."

"In a few hours, monseigneur, I leave, with my father and daughter, for Fontainebleau; we will remain there for some time; then, according to the wish of my father, we shall return to Paris, but not to my own house; it will be impossible for me to live there after the deplorable accident which has taken place."

"Thus, as I have said, monseigneur, on commencing this letter, events show all that I owe to your solicitude. Warned by you, aided by your advice, strong in the co-operation of your excellent and courageous Sir Walter, I have been able to snatch my father from certain death, and I am assured of the return of his tenderness."

"Adieu, monseigneur; it is impossible for me to say more, my heart is too full; too many emotions agitate it; I should badly express all that I feel."

D'ORBIGNY D'HARVILLE.

"I open this letter in haste, monseigneur, to repair a neglect of which I am ashamed. In seeking, from your noble advice, to do some good, I went to the prison of Saint Lazare to visit the poor prisoners: I found there an unfortunate child in whom you are interested. Her angelic sweetness, her pious resignation, are the admiration of the respectable women who overlook the inmates. To inform you where the Goualeuse (such, I believe, is her name) can be found, is to request you to obtain her liberty; this unfortunate girl will relate to you by what a concourse of sinister circumstances, carried away from the asylum where you had placed her, she has been thrown into this prison, where she is appreciated by the purity of her conduct. Permit me also to recall to your mind my two future protégées, monseigneur, the unhappy mother and daughter—despoiled by the notary Ferrand. Where are they? Have you had any information concerning them? Oh! I pray you, endeavour to discover them, so that on my return to Paris I can pay them the debt which I have contracted towards all unfortunates!"

"The Goualeuse has, then, left the farm of Bouqueval, monseigneur?" cried Murph, as much astonished as Rodolphe at this new revelation.

"I heard but just now that she was seen coming out of Saint Lazare," answered Rodolphe; "I am lost in conjecture: the silence of Madame Georges confounds and distresses me. Poor little Fleur de Marie, what new misfortunes have happened to you? Let a man on horseback be sent off at once to the farm, and write to Madame Georges that I beg her to come at once to Paris. Say also to M. de Graün, I wish a permission to enter Saint Lazare. From what Madame d'Harville writes, Fleur de Marie is confined there; but no," said Rodolphe, reflecting, "she is no longer a prisoner, for Rigolette saw her come out in company with an aged woman. Can it be Madame Georges? otherwise, who is the woman? where is the Goualeuse gone to?"

"Patience, monseigneur; before this night you shall know all about it, since to-morrow you will have to interrogate this scoundrel Polidori; he has, he said, important communications to make to you, but to you alone."

"This interview will be hateful to me," said Rodolphe, sadly; "for I have never seen this man since the fatal day—where—I have—"

Rodolphe could not finish; he concealed his face in his hands.

"Eh! mon Dieu! monseigneur, why consent to what Polidori demands? Threaten him with the French courts, or a demand on the govern-

ment; he must resign himself to confess to me what he is only willing to confess to you."

"You are right, my good friend; for the sight of this wretch would render still more torturing these terrible recollections, to which are attached so many incurable griefs; from the death of my father to that of my poor little girl—I do not know but the more I advance in life, the more I feel the loss of this child. How I should have adored her! how dear and precious to me had been this fruit of my first love, of my first and pure beliefs, or, rather, my young illusions! I should have poured upon this innocent creature the treasures of affection, of which its odious mother was unworthy; and, besides, it seems to me that, such as I had dreamed her, this child, by the beauty of her mind, by the charms of her disposition, would have softened, calmed all the remorse which was attached, alas! to her fatal birth."

"Hold, monseigneur: I see with pain the increasing sway which these regrets, as fruitless as cruel, have upon your mind."

After a pause, Rodolphe said to Murph,

"I can now make a confession to you, my old friend. I love—yes, I love passionately a woman worthy of the most noble and devoted affection. Ah! it is since my heart is opened anew to all the delights of love, since I am predisposed to tender emotions, that I feel more vividly the loss of my daughter. I should have feared thus to speak, that a new attachment might have weakened my regrets. It is not so: all my loving faculties have augmented. I feel myself better, more charitable; and, more than ever, it is cruel to me not to have my daughter to adore." "Nothing can be plainer, monseigneur, and pardon the comparison; but, in the same manner, as certain men are joyous and benevolent in their intoxication, you are good and generous in your love."

"Yet my hatred of the wicked is also become lively; my aversion to Sarah increases, doubtless, with my grief for the death of my child. I imagine that this bad mother has neglected her; that her ambitious hopes once ruined by my marriage, the comtesse, in her selfish egotism, has abandoned our child to mercenary hands, and that my daughter is perhaps dead from want of care. It is also my fault: I did not then know the extent of the sacred duties of paternity. When the true character of Sarah was suddenly revealed to me, I should have at once taken my daughter from her, to watch over her with love and solicitude. I ought to have foreseen that the comtesse could never be more than an unnatural mother. It is my fault—do you see—it is my fault."

"Monseigneur, grief causes you to err. Could you, after such a fatal event had happened, defer for one day the long journey imposed on you—as—" "As an expiation! You are right, my friend," said Rodolphe, sorrowfully.

"Have you heard anything from the comtesse since my departure, monseigneur?"

"No: since her infamous accusations, which twice came near proving the ruin of Madame d'Harville, I have no news of her. Her presence here annoys me; it seems that my evil spirit is near me, that some new misfortune threatens me."

"Patience, monseigneur, patience. Happily, Germany is interdicted for her, and Germany expects us."

"Yes: we will soon depart. At least, during

my short stay at Paris, I shall have accomplished a sacred duty: I shall have made some steps more in the worthy path which an august and merciful will pointed out to me for my redemption. As soon as the son of Madame Georges shall be restored to her arms, innocent and free; as soon as Jacques Ferrand shall be convicted and punished for his crimes; as soon as I shall be assured of the future comforts of all the honest and industrious creatures who, by their resignation, their courage, and their probity, have deserved my interest, we will return to Germany—my journey will not have been fruitless."

"Above all, if you succeed in unmasking this abominable Jacques Ferrand, monseigneur, the corner-stone of so many crimes. Although the end justifies the means, and scruples should have no weight as regards this scoundrel, sometimes I regret having employed Cécily in this just and avenging reparation."

"She ought to arrive every moment?"

"She has arrived." "Cécily?"

"Yes; I did not wish to see her; De Graun has given her very detailed instructions; she has promised to conform to them."

"Will she keep this promise?"

"Everything seems to promise it—the hope of a mitigation of her punishment, and the fear of being sent immediately back to Germany; for De Graun has her well watched; at the slightest 'incartade' he will demand her of the government."

"It is just: she has arrived as an escaped convict; when they know what crimes caused her perpetual imprisonment, they would give her up at once." * * *

"That does not astonish me, my worthy. Murph, for I know this woman; besides, De Graun was almost alarmed at the sagacity with which Cécily comprehended, or, rather, guessed the part, at once *provoking* and *platonic*, she was to play at the notary's."

"But can she be introduced to him as early as you wish, monseigneur, through Madame Pipelet? People of the species of Jacques Ferrand are so suspicious."

"I had, with reason, counted on the appearance of Cécily to combat and conquer this suspicion."

"Has he already seen her?"

"Yesterday. From the account given by Madame Pipelet, I do not doubt but that he was fascinated by the Creole; he took her at once in his service."

"Come, monseigneur, our game is won."

"I hope so; a ferocious cupidity, and a savage luxury, have led the executioner of Louise Morel to the most frightful misdeeds. It is in his luxury, it is in his cupidity, that he will find the punishment of his crimes. A punishment which will not be barren for his victims; for you see the aim of all the efforts of the Creole."

"Cécily! Cécily! Never did greater depravity, never a more dangerous corruption, never a blacker soul serve to the accomplishment of a project of higher morality, or of a more equitable end; and David, monseigneur?" "He approves of all. With all the contempt and horror which he has for this creature, he only sees in her the instrument of a just vengeance. 'If this cursed woman can ever merit any compassion after all the injury she has done me,' said he to me, 'it will be in devoting herself to the punishment of this scoundrel, for whom she must be an exterminating demon.'"

A "huissier" having knocked slightly at the door, Murph went out, and returned, bringing in two letters, one of which seemed intended for Rodolphe.

"It is a line from Madame Georges!" cried he, reading it rapidly.

"Oh, bien! monseigneur—La Goualeuse?"

"No more doubt," cried Rodolphe, after having read the letter; "another mysterious plot. The same evening on which the poor child disappeared, and at the moment Madame Georges was about to inform me of the event, a man, whom she did not know, arrived express on horse-back, came to her, as from me, to reassure her, saying, I was informed of the sudden departure of Fleur de Marie, and that some day I would bring her back to the farm. Notwithstanding this notice, Madame Georges, uneasy at my silence respecting her protégée, cannot, she writes me, resist her desire to have some news of her cherished daughter, as she calls this poor child."

"This is strange, monseigneur."

"For what end should she have been carried off?"

"Monseigneur," said Murph, suddenly, "the Comtesse Sarah is no stranger to this affair."

"Sarah? And what makes you think so?"

"Compare this with her denunciations to Madame d'Harville."

"You are right," cried Rodolphe, a new light bursting upon him; "it is evident; I comprehend now; yes, always the same calculating. The comtesse persists in believing, that by succeeding to break every tie of affection, she will make me feel the want of her. This is as odious as useless. Yet such an unworthy persecution must have an end. It is not only against me, but against all who merit respect, interest, and pity, that this woman directs her attacks. You will send M. de Graün at once, officially, to the comtesse; he will declare to her that I am advised of the part she has taken in the abduction of Fleur de Marie, and that if she does not give me the necessary information so that I can recover this unhappy child, I shall act without pity, and then it is to justice M. de Graün must address himself."

"From the letter of Madame d'Harville, the Goualeuse must be confined at Saint Lazare."

"Yes; but Rigolette affirms that she saw her free, coming out of this prison. There is a mystery to be cleared up."

"I will go at once and give your orders to the Baron de Graün, monseigneur; but allow me to open this letter; it is from my correspondent at Marseilles, to whom I recommended the Chourineur, to facilitate the passage of the poor devil to Algiers." "Well! has he gone?"

"Monseigneur, here is something singular!"

"What is it?" "After having waited at Marseilles a long time for a vessel to depart for Algiers, the Chourineur, who seemed every day more sad and thoughtful, suddenly declared, the day being fixed for his departure, that he preferred to return to Paris."

"How singular!" "Although my correspondent had, as was agreed upon, placed a considerable sum of money at the disposal of the Chourineur, he only took what was absolutely necessary for him to return to Paris, where he will soon arrive, as they write me."

"Then he will explain to us himself why he has changed his mind; but send De Graün at once to the Comtesse McGregor, and go yourself to Saint Lazare to gain some information concerning Fleur de Marie."

In an hour's time the Baron de Graün returned from the Comtesse Sarah's.

Notwithstanding his habitual and official sang froid, the diplomatist seemed troubled; hardly had the huissier announced him, than Rodolphe remarked his paleness.

"Well! De Graün, what is the matter? have you seen the comtesse?" "Ah! monseigneur!"

"What is it?" "Will your royal highness pardon me for informing you so suddenly of an event so fatal, so unlooked-for, so—"

"The comtesse is, then, dead?"

"No, monseigneur, but her life is despaired of; she has been stabbed with a poniard."

"Ah! it is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, touched with pity, notwithstanding his aversion to Sarah. "And who has committed this crime?"

"No one knows, monseigneur; the murder was accompanied by robbery; some one has entered the apartment of the comtesse, and carried off a large quantity of jewels."

"And how is she now?"

"Her life is almost despaired of, monseigneur; she has not yet recovered her consciousness. Her brother is in a state of distraction." "You must go every day to inquire after her, my dear De Graün."

At this moment Murph returned from Saint Lazare.

"Learn sad news!" said Rodolphe to him; "the Comtesse Sarah has been wounded! her life is in great danger."

"Ah! monseigneur; although she is very culpable, yet I cannot but pity her."

"Yes; such an end would be frightful! And the Goualeuse?"

"Set at liberty yesterday, monseigneur, supposed by the intervention of Madame d'Harville."

"But it is impossible! Madame d'Harville begs me, on the contrary, to make the necessary arrangements to get her out of prison."

"Doubtless, monseigneur; and yet, an aged woman, of respectable appearance, came to Saint Lazare, bringing the order to set Fleur de Marie at liberty. Both have left the prison. This is what Rigolette told me; but this aged woman, who is she? where have they gone to? what is this new mystery? The Comtesse Sarah alone can enlighten us; and she is in a state to give us no information. May she not carry this secret with her to the tomb?"

"But her brother, Thomas Seyton, could certainly throw some light upon the affair. He has always been the adviser of the comtesse."

"His sister is dying; some new plot is on foot; he will not speak; but," said Rodolphe, reflecting, "we must find out the name of the person who applied for her release; thus we can learn something."

"It is just, monseigneur."

"Try, then, to know and see this person as soon as possible, my dear De Graün; if you do not succeed, put your M. Badinot in the field—spare nothing to discover the traces of this poor child."

"Your royal highness may count on my zeal."

"Ma foi, monseigneur," said Murph, "it is perhaps as well that the Chourineur returns; we may need his services for these researches."

"You are right; and now I am impatient to see arrive at Paris my brave deliverer, for I shall never forget that to him I owe my life."

CHAPTER XV.

THE OFFICE.

SEVERAL days had passed since Jacques Ferrand had taken Cecily into his service.

We will conduct the reader (who already is acquainted with the place) to the office of the notary, at the breakfast hour for the clerks.

A thing unheard-of, stupendous, marvellous! instead of the meager and unattractive ragout brought every morning to these young people by the departed Madame Seraphin, an enormous cold turkey, served up on an old paper-box, ornamented the middle of one of the tables of the office, flanked by two loaves of bread, some Dutch cheese, and three bottles of sealed wine; an old leaden inkstand, filled with a mixture of salt and pepper, served as a salt-cellar; such was the bill of fare.

Each clerk, armed with his knife and a formidable appetite, awaited the hour of the feast with hungry impatience; some of them were cursing the absence of the head clerk, without whom they could not hierarchically commence their breakfast.

This radical change in the ordinary of the clerks of Jacques Ferrand announced an excessive domestic perturbation.

The following conversation, eminently *bottien* (if we may be allowed to borrow this word from the very witty writer who has made it popular), will throw some light upon this important question:

"Behold a turkey who never expected, when he entered into life, to appear at breakfast on the table of the clerks of the 'patron'!"

"Just so; when the 'patron' entered this life of a notary, in like manner he never expected to give his clerks a turkey for breakfast."

"For, in fine this turkey is ours," cried the gutter-jumper of the office, with greedy eyes.

"Gutter-jumper, my friend, you forget; this fowl must be a stranger to you."

"And, as a Frenchman, you should hate a stranger."

"All that can be done is to give you the claws."

"Emblem of the velocity with which you do your errands."

"I think, at least, I have a right to the carcass!" said gutter-jumper, murmuring.

"It might be granted; but you have no right, just as it was with the Charte of 1814, which was only another carcass of liberty," said the Mirabeau of the office.

"Apropos of carcass," said one of the students, with brutal insensibility. "May the soul of La Mère Seraphin rest in peace! for, since she was drowned, we are no longer condemned to hear her everlasting gabble."

"And for a week past, the 'patron,' instead of giving us a breakfast—" "Allows us each forty sous a day."

"This is the reason, I say; may her soul rest in peace."

"Exactly; for in her time the 'patron' would never have given us the forty sous."

"It is enormous!" "It is astonishing!"

"There is not an office in Paris—"

"In Europe."

"In the universe, where they give forty sous to a simple clerk for his breakfast."

"Apropos of Madame Seraphin, who of you has seen the new servant that takes her place?"

"This Alsatian, whom the portière of the

house where poor Louise lived brought one evening?"

"Yes." "I have not seen her yet."

"Nor I." "Parbleu! it is altogether impossible to see her, for the 'patron' is more savage than ever to prevent our entering the pavilion in the courtyard."

"And, since it is the porter who cleans the office now, how can one get a glimpse at the 'donzelle'?"

"Well, I have seen her." "You?"

"Where was that?" "How is she?"

"Large or small?" "Young or old?"

"I am sure, in advance, that she has not so good-looking a face as poor Louise—the good girl!"

"Come, since you have seen her, how does this new servant look?" "When I say I saw her, I have seen her cap—a very funny cap."

"Ah, bah! and how?" "It was cherry colour, and of velvet, I believe; something like those worn by the little broom girls." "Like the Alsations? it is very plain, since she is an Alsatian."

"Hold! hold! hold!"

"Parbleu! what is it that surprises you? A scalded cat dreads cold water." "Ah, ça! Chafamel! what relation between your proverb and this cap?"

"There is none." "Why did you say it, then?" "Because, *un bien fait n'est jamais perdu*, and that *le lézard est l'ami de l'homme*."

"Hold! If Chafamel begins his *bêtises* in proverbs, which mean nothing, we are in for it. Come, tell us what you know of this new servant."

"The day before yesterday I passed through the court; she had her back towards one of the windows of the rez-de-chaussée." "The court?"

"What stupidity! No, the servant. The glasses are so dirty that I could see nothing of her figure; but I could see her cherry-coloured cap, and a profusion of curls, as black as jet; for she had her head dressed à la Titus." "I am sure that the patron would not have seen through his spectacles as much as you did; for here you have one, as they say, who, if he remained alone with a woman on the earth, the world would soon come to an end."

"That is not astonishing. *He laughs best who laughs the last*; so much the more, as *exactness is the politeness of kings*."

"Dieu! How wearisome this Chafamel is when he lays himself out to it!" "Dame! Tell me where you frequent, and I will tell you who you are."

"Oh! how pretty!"

"As for me, I have an idea that it is superstition that stupifies the patron more and more."

"It is, perhaps, from penitence, that he gives us forty sous for our breakfast." "The fact is, he must be crazy." "Or sick." "I think for the last two or three days he has been quite wild."

"It is not that we see him so much. He who was for our curse in his cabinet from morning till night, and always at our backs, now has not, for two days, put his nose into the office."

"That is the reason the head clerk has so much to do." "And that we are obliged to die with hunger in waiting for him." "What a change in the office!"

"Poor Germain would be much astonished if any one should say to him, 'Imagine, my boy, that the patron gives us forty sous for our break-

fast." "Ah, bah! It is impossible!" "It is possible; it is I, Chalamel, speaking in his own person, who announces it." "You wish to laugh." "I wish to laugh? This is the way it came to pass. During the two or three days which followed the decease of the Mère Séraphin, we did not breakfast at all. We liked that on one account, it was not so bad; but, on the other, our refectory cost us money. Yet we were very patient, saying, "The patron has no longer a house-keeper or servant; when he gets one, we shall resume our disgusting 'pâtée.'" Well, not at all, my poor Germain. The patron took a new servant, and our breakfast continued to be buried in the waters of forgetfulness. Then I was made a deputy to carry to the patron the complaints of our stomachs. He was with the head clerk. "I no longer wish to furnish you with your breakfast," said he, in a cross tone, as if he was thinking of something else. "My servant has not the time to attend to you." "But, monsieur, it was agreed that you should furnish us with our breakfast." "Well, you can send for it, and I will pay. How much do you want? Forty sous each?" added he, as if he was thinking of something else, and said forty sous as he might have twenty or a hundred. "Yes, monsieur, forty sous will suffice," cried I, catching the ball as it bounded. "So be it; the head clerk will pay this amount, and account to me." And thereupon the patron shut the door in my face. Acknowledge, gentlemen, that Germain would be much astonished at the liberality of the patron."

"Germain would say the patron was drunk."

"Seriously, I think the patron is sick: since ten days he is no longer recognisable; his cheeks are hollow enough to put in your fists."

"And so absent! The other day he raised his spectacles to read an act; his eyes were red and burning as live coals." "He had the right. *Good accounts make good friends.*"

"Let me speak, then. I tell you, gentlemen, that this is very singular. I presented this act to the patron to be read; but he held his head down." "The patron?" "The fact is, that this is very singular. What could he have been doing thus with his head down? He must have suffocated, unless his habits were, as you say, much changed."

"Oh! how fatiguing this Chalamel is! I tell you I gave this act to him upside down."

"How he must have growled!"

"Ah, well, yes! He did not even perceive it; he looked at the act for ten minutes, his great red eyes fixed upon it, and then he returned it to me, saying, 'It is well!'" "With his head always down?" "Always." "He did not read the act, then?"

"Pardieu! unless he read it upside down."

"It is droll!" "The patron looked so solemn and so wicked at that time, that I did not dare to tell him; and I walked off as if nothing had happened." "And I, also, four days ago, was in the office of the head clerk; a client came in, two clients, three clients, to whom the patron had given an appointment. They were amazed at being obliged to wait. At their request, I knocked at the door of the cabinet; no one answered; I entered." "Well?" "M. Jacques Ferrand had his arms crossed on his desk, and his bald head, not very savoury, resting on his arms: he did not stir." "He slept?" "I thought so. I approached. 'Monsieur, there are some of your clients here, to whom you have given an appoint-

ment.' He did not move. 'Monsieur!' No answer. At length I touched him on the shoulder; he started as if the devil had bitten him. In this sudden movement, his large green glasses fell below his nose, and I saw—you will never believe it!" "Well, what did you see?" "Tears."

"Ah! what a farce!"

"The patron weep? Get out!"

"Ah! when that is seen, the May-bugs will play on the 'cornet à piston!'"

"And pullets wear white-top boots!"

"Ta, ta, ta! Your stupid jokes will not alter what I have seen, as plainly as I see you."

"Weep?" "Yes, weep. Afterward, he was so mad at my seeing him thus, that he adjusted his spectacles, and cried, 'Walk out! walk out!' 'But, monsieur—' 'Walk out!' 'There are some clients here.' 'I have no time; let them go to the devil, and you with them!' Thereupon he arose quite in a rage, as if to put me out. I did not wait; I marched to the right-about, and sent off the clients, who were not very well satisfied. But, for the honour of the office, I told them the patron had the whooping-cough."

This interesting conversation was interrupted by the head clerk, who entered, full of business. His arrival was saluted by a general acclamation, and all eyes were turned sympathetically towards the turkey with impatient eagerness.

"Without reproach, *seigneur*, you have made us wait a devilish long time," said the Chalamel.

"Take care another time; our appetites may not be in such a state of subordination."

"Eh! messieurs, it is not my fault; I feel as mad as you do; on my word of honour, the patron must have become crazy."

"Just as I said." "But that will not hinder us from eating." "On the contrary—"

"We can talk just as well with our mouths full."

"We can speak better," cried the gutter-jumper; while Chalamel, carving the turkey, said to the head clerk, "Why do you think the patron is crazy?"

"We have already concluded to believe him perfectly distracted, when he allowed us forty sous for our breakfast daily."

"I avow that this has surprised me as much as you, gentlemen; but that was nothing, absolutely nothing, in comparison to what has taken place just now."

"Ah, bah!" "Ah, ça! is it that this unfortunate man should become so mad as to force us to dine every day at his expense at the 'Cadran-Bleu?'"

"And afterward to the theatre?"

"And then to the café, and finish with some punch."

"And afterward—"

"Gentlemen, joke as much as you please, but the scene I have just been witnessing is rather frightful than pleasing." "Well! relate to us this scene."

"Yes, that is it; never mind your breakfast," said Chalamel. "We are all ears."

"And all jaw, my larks! I understand. While I talk you will play with your teeth, and the turkey and my story will be finished at the same time. Patience; it shall be for the dessert."

Was it the excitement of hunger or curiosity which gave activity to our young practitioners—we do not know; but they put so much rapidity in their gastronomic operations, that the moment for the recital of the head clerk arrived almost instantaneously.

Not to be surprised by the patron, they sent young gutter-jumper, on whom the carcass and the claws of the turkey had been most liberally bestowed, as a sentry into the neighbouring room.

The head clerk said to his colleagues, "In the first place, you must know that, for some days past, the porter has been alarmed about the health of the patron. As the good man sits up very late, he has seen M. Ferrand go down to the garden in the night, in spite of the cold and rain, and walk up and down rapidly. He ventured to leave his nest, and ask his master if he had need of anything. The patron sent him to bed in such a tone that, since then, the porter has kept himself quiet, and he will keep himself so always, as soon as he hears the patron descend to the garden, which happens every night, no matter what weather."

"The patron is, perhaps, a somnambulist?"

"That is not probable; but such nocturnal promenades announce great agitation. I arrive at my story: Just now, I went into the cabinet of the patron to get some signatures. At the moment I placed my hand on the lock, I thought I heard some one speak. I stopped, and I distinguished two or three dull cries, like stifled sobs. After having hesitated to enter for a moment—*ma foi!* fearing some misfortune, I opened the door."

"Well?"

"What did I see? The patron on his knees, on the ground!"

"On his knees?" "On the ground?"

"Yes; kneeling on the floor, his face in his hands, and his elbows leaning on the bottom of one of his old arm-chairs." "It is very plain. What fools we are! He is so bigoted, he was making an extra prayer."

"In any case, it would be a funny prayer! Nothing could be heard but stifled groans, only from time to time he murmured, between his teeth, '*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!*' like a man in a state of despair. *Ma foi!* seeing this, I did not know whether I ought to remain or retire."

"That would have been also my political opinion."

"I remained, then, there, very much embarrassed, when the patron arose and turned suddenly. He had between his teeth an old pocket-handkerchief; his spectacles remained on the chair. No, no, messieurs, in my life I have never seen such a face: he had the appearance of the damned. I drew back, alarmed—on my word of honour, alarmed! Then he—"

"Caught you by the throat?"

"You are out there. He looked at me, at first, with a bewildered air; then, letting his handkerchief fall, which he had, doubtless, gnawed and torn in grinding his teeth, he cried, throwing himself into my arms, '*Ah! I am very unhappy!*'"

"What a farce!"

"What a farce? Well, in spite of his death's-head look, when he pronounced these words his voice was so heart-rending—I would say, almost, so soft—"

"So soft? Get out! There is not a rattle, nor Tom-cat with a cold, whose sounds would not be music alongside the voice of the patron!"

"It is possible; that did not prevent his voice from being so plaintive at that time that I felt myself quite affected; so much the more as M. Ferrand is not habitually communicative. '*Mon-*

sieur,' said I, 'I believe that.' '*Leave me! leave me!*' he answered, interrupting me; '*to tell your sufferings to another is a great solace.*' Evidently he took me for some one else."

"He *tutoyé*? Then you owe us two bottles of Bordeaux:"

"Quand le patron vous a *tutoyé*
A boire vous devez payer."

It is the proverb that speaks; it is sacred. Proverbs are the wisdom of a nation."

"Come, Chalamel, leave your proverbs alone. You well comprehend, messieurs, that, on hearing the patron '*tutoyer*,' I at once understood that he was mistaken, or that he was in a high fever. I disengaged myself, saying, '*Monsieur, calm yourself, calm yourself! it is I.*' Then he looked at me with a stupid look."

"Very well! now that sounds like the truth."

"His eyes were wild. '*Héu!*' he answered.

'*What is it?—who is there?—what do you want with me?*' And at each question he passed his hand over his face, as if to drive away the clouds which obscured his thoughts."

"Which obscured his thoughts! Just as if it were written! Bravo! head clerk; we will make a melodrama together."

"Who speaks so well, and so polite,
A melodrama ought to write."

"Do hold your tongue, Chalamel. *Ma foi!* I know nothing about it; but what is sure is, that, when he recovered his *sang froid*, it was another song. He knit his brows in a terrible manner, and said to me, with quickness, without giving me time to answer, '*What did you come here for?—have you been a long time here?—can I not be alone in my own house without being surrounded by spies?—what have I said?—what have you heard?* Answer, answer.' *Ma foi!* he looked so wicked that I replied, '*I have heard nothing, monsieur: I just came in.*' '*You do not deceive me?*' '*No, monsieur.*' '*Well, what do you want?*' '*To ask you for some signatures, monsieur.*' '*Give me the papers.*' And he began to sign—to sign, without reading them, a half dozen notarial acts—he who never put his flourish on an act without spelling it, letter by letter, and twice over, from end to end. I remarked that, from time to time, his hand slackened a little in the middle of his signature, as if he was absorbed by a fixed idea, and then he resumed and signed quickly—quickly, and in a convulsive manner. When all were signed he told me to retire, and I heard him descend by the little staircase which leads from his cabinet to the court."

"I now come back to this: what can the matter be with him?"

"Messieurs, it is, perhaps, Madame Séraphin he regrets."

"Oh, yes! he regret any one!"

"That reminds me of what the porter said: that the Curé of Bonne-Nouvelle and his vicar had called several times, and were not received. That is surprising!"

"As for me, what I want to know is, what the carpenter and locksmith have been doing in the pavilion."

"The fact is, they have worked there for three days consecutively."

"And then, one evening they brought some furniture here in a covered cart."

"*Ma foi, messieurs, trou, la, la! I give my tongue to the dogs, as sung the swan of Cambrai!*"

"It is, perhaps, regret for having imprisoned Germain which torments him."

"Remorse, is it? It is, too, hard to cook, and too tough for him, as the eagle of Meauve said."

"Farceur of a Châlamel!"

"Speaking of Germain, he is going to have famous recruits in his prison, poor fellow."

"How is that?"

"I read, in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*, that the band of robbers and assassins who have been arrested in the Champs Elysées, in one of those little subterranean taverns—"

"They are real caverns."

"That this band of scoundrels have been confined at *La Force*."

"Poor Germain, this will be good society for him!"

"Louise Morel will have also her part of the recruits; for in the band they say there is a whole family of brigands, from father to son and mother to daughter."

"Then they will send the women to Saint Lazare, where Louise is."

"It is, perhaps, some of this band who have attempted the life of this comtesse who lives near the Observatoire, one of our patron's clients. Has he not sent me often enough to know how she is? He appears to be very much interested about her health. Only yesterday he sent me again to inquire how Madame Mc'Gregor had passed the night." "Well?"

"Always uncertain: one day they hope, the next despair—they never know whether she will get through the day; two days ago she was given up; but yesterday there was a ray of hope; what complicates the matter is, that she has a brain fever."

"Could you go into the house, and see the place where the deed was committed?"

"Oh! by no means! I could go no farther than the 'porte cochère,' and the 'concierge' did not seem disposed to talk much, not as—"

"Messieurs, here comes the patron," cried Gutter-Jumper, entering the office, always armed with the carcass. Immediately the young men seated themselves hastily at their respective tables, over which they bent, moving their pens, while the Gutter-Jumper deposited for the moment the skeleton of the turkey in a box filled with law papers.

Jacques Ferrand appeared.

Taking off his old silk cap, his red hair, mixed with gray, fell in disorder from each side of his temples; some of the veins on his forehead seemed injected with blood, while his flat face and hollow cheeks were of a livid paleness. The expression of his eyes could not be seen, concealed as they were by his large green spectacles; but the visible alteration of his features announced a consuming passion.

He crossed the office slowly, without saying a word to his clerks, without appearing to notice their presence, entered the room of the head clerk, walked through it, as well as his own cabinet, and descended immediately by the little staircase which led to the court. Jacques Ferrand having left behind him all the doors open, the clerks could, with good reason, be astonished at the extraordinary motions of their patron, who came up one staircase and descended another, without stopping in any of the chambers, which he had traversed mechanically.

CHAPTER XVI.

LE MOINEUX POINT NE GRECO.

It was night.

The profound silence which reigned in the pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand was interrupted at intervals by the sighing of the wind, and by the gusts of rain, which fell in torrents. These melancholy sounds seemed to render still more complete the solitude of this dwelling.

In a bedchamber on the first floor, very comfortably and newly furnished, and covered with a thick carpet, a young woman was standing before an excellent fire.

What was very strange, in the centre of the door, which was strongly bolted, and opposite to the bed, was placed a small wicket of about five or six inches square, which could be opened on the outside.

A reflecting lamp cast an obscure light in this room, which was hung with a garnet-coloured silk; the curtains of the bed of the window, as also the covering of a large sofa, are of silk and worsted damask, of the same colour.

We insist to be minute in these details of *demi-luxe* so recently imported into the dwelling of the notary, because this *demi-luxe* announces a complete revolution in the habits of Jacques Ferrand, who, until then, was of Spartan avarice and meanness (above all as respected others) for all that concerned living.

It is, then, on this garnet tapestry, of a strong back-ground and warmth of colour, on which is delineated the figure of Cécily, that we are going to paint her.

Of tall and graceful stature, the Creole is in the flower and in the bloom of youth. The development of her fine shoulders, and of her luxurious person, makes her waist appear so marvellously slender, that one would believe that Cécily might use her necklace for a "ceinture."

As simple as it is coquetish and provoking, her Alsatian costume is of a strange taste, a little theatrical, and thus more calculated for the effect it was intended to produce.

Her spencer of black cassimere, half open on her swelling bosom, very long in the "corsage," with tight sleeves and plain back, is slightly embroidered with purple wool on the seams, and trimmed with a row of small, chased, silver buttons. A short petticoat of orange merino, which seems of exaggerated amplitude, although it fits admirably on the "contours" of sculptural richness, allows a glance at the charming leg of the Creole, with the scarlet stockings and blue clocks, just as is met with among the old Flemish painters, who show so complacently the garters of their robust heroines.

Never did artist dream of a "galle" as pure as that of the "jambes" of Cécily; strong and muscular above their "mallet rebondi," they terminated by a small foot, quite at ease, and well arched in its very "petit" shoe of black morocco, with silver buckles.

Cécily is standing before the glass on the chimney-piece! The slope of her spencer displays her elegant and graceful neck of dazzling whiteness, but without transparency.

Taking off her cherry-coloured cap, to replace it by a "madrian," the Creole displayed her thick and magnificent hair of bluish black, which, divided in the middle of her forehead, and naturally curled, descended no lower than the "collier de Venus," which joins the neck to

the shoulders. One cannot know the inimitable taste with which a Creole twists around her head these handkerchiefs, to have an idea of the graceful "coiffure de nuit" of Cécily, and of the piquant contrast of this tissue, variegated with purple, azure, and orange, with her black hair, which, escaping from the close folds of the "madras," surround, with their large, silky curls, her pale, but round and firm cheeks.

The two arms raised above her head, she finished, with her slender, ivory fingers, arranging a large "rosette" placed very low on the left side, almost on the ear.

The features of Cécily are of the kind which it is impossible ever to forget.

A bold forehead, slightly projecting, surmounted a visage of perfect oval; her complexion of a dead white, the satin-like freshness of a camellia imperceptibly touched by a ray of the sun; her eyes, of a size almost immoderate, have a singular expression, for the pupil, extremely large, black, and brilliant, hardly allows the transparent "bleuâtre" of the globe of the eye to be seen from the corners of her eyelids, fringed with long lashes; her chin is perfect; her nose, straight and "fin," is terminated by two nostrils which dilate at each emotion; her lovely and impudent mouth is of a lively red.

Let one imagine this pale face, with its sparkling black glances, its red, moist, and glossy lips, which shine like wet coral.

Let us say that this tall Creole, at once slender and fleshy, strong and active as a panther, was the type in nature of that sensuality which is only lighted up at the fires of the tropics.

Such was Cécily.

Her detestable predilections, for some time restrained by her real attachment for David, were only developed in Europe; civilization and climatical influence of the North had tempered the violence, modified the expression. Instead of casting herself violently on her prey, and thinking only, like her compere, to destroy as soon as possible their life and fortune, Cécily, fixing on her victims her magnetic glances, commenced by attracting them, little by little, into the blazing whirlwind which seemed to emanate from her; then, seeing them lost, suffering every torment of a "desir massouvi," she amused herself by a refinement of coquetry, to prolong their delirium; then, returning to her first instincts, she destroyed them in her homicidal "embrassements."

This was more horrible still.

The famished tiger, who springs and carries off the prey which he tears with loud roars, inspires less horror than the serpent, which silently charms, attracts by degrees, twists in inextricable folds the victim, feels it palpitate under its deadly stings, and seems to feed upon its struggles with as much delight as upon its blood.

Cécily, as we have said, but lately arrived from Germany; having formerly been seduced by a man frightfully depraved, she continued, without the knowledge of David, who loved her with as much idolatry as blindness, to display and exercise, for some time, her dangerous blandishments; but soon the fatal scandal of her adventures was unveiled; horrible discoveries were made, and she was condemned to perpetual imprisonment.

To the foregoing let there be joined an adroit, insinuating, quick mind—an intelligence so marvellous, that in a year she spoke both French

and German, with the most extreme facility, sometimes even with marked eloquence. Imagine, in fine, a corruption worthy of the courtesan queens of ancient Rome, and audacity and courage above all proof, propensities, diabolical wickedness, and one would have a correct idea of the new servant of Jacques Ferrand—the determined creature who had dared to throw herself into the den of the wolf. And yet (singular anomaly), on learning from M. de Graun the provoking and platonic part which she was to play at the house of the notary, and what avenging ends were to be produced by her artifices, Cécily had promised to perform her *part avec amour*; or, rather, with a terrible hatred against Jacques Ferrand, being very indignant at the recital of the infamous violence he had used towards Louise—a recital it was found necessary to make, in order that she should be on her guard against the hypocritical attempts of this monster. Some retrospective words concerning the latter personage are indispensable.

When Cécily was presented to him by Madame Pipelet, as an orphan over whom she wished to have no control, no care, the notary had, perhaps, been less struck with the beauty of the Creole than fascinated by her irresistible glances—glances which, from the first interview, lighted a fire which disturbed his reason.

For we have said, in speaking of the insensate audacity of some of his words in the conversation with Madame de Lucenay, that this man, ordinarily with so much self-command, so calm, so cunning, forgot the cold calculations of his profound dissimulation, when the demon of luxury obscured his mind. Besides, he had no reason to doubt the protégée of Madame Pipelet.

After his conversation with the latter, Madame Séraphin had proposed to Jacques Ferrand to take the place of Louise, a young girl almost without a home, for whom she would answer. The notary had gladly accepted, in the hope of abusing, with impunity, the precarious and isolated condition of his new servant.

Finally, far from being suspicious, Jacques Ferrand found, in the march of events, new motives of security.

All responded to his wishes.

The death of Madame Séraphin rid him of a dangerous accomplice. The death of Fleur de Marie (he thought her dead) released him from the living proof of one of his first crimes. Then, thanks to the death of La Chouette, and the precarious situation of the Comtesse M'Gregor, he no longer feared these two women, whose revelations and importunities might have been fatal.

We repeat, no sentiment of suspicion came to counterbalance in his mind the sudden, irresistible impression which he had experienced at the sight of Cécily. He seized, with delight, the occasion to receive into his solitary dwelling the pretended niece of Madame Pipelet.

The character, habits, and antecedents of Jacques Ferrand known and stated, the provoking beauty of the Creole, such as we have endeavoured to paint it, some other facts which we will now expose, will cause to be comprehended, we hope, the sudden, phrensied passion of the notary, for this seductive and dangerous creature.

Although Jacques Ferrand was never to obtain the object of his wishes, the Creole was very careful not to deprive him of all hope; but the

vague and distant hopes which she rocked in the cradle of so many capris were for him only increased tortures, and rivetted more solidly still the burning chain he wore.

If any astonishment is felt that a man of such vigour and audacity had not had recourse to cunning or violence to triumph over the calculated resistance of Cécily, then it must have been forgotten that Cécily was not a second Louise. Besides, the next day after her presentation to the notary, she had played quite another part than she by whose aid she had been introduced to her master, or he would not have been the dupe of his servant for two consecutive days.

Instructed of the fate of Louise by the Baron de Grain, and knowing afterward by what abominable means the unfortunate daughter of Morel had become the prey of the notary, the Creole, entering into this solitary house, had taken excellent precautions to pass the first night in security.

The same evening of her arrival, remaining alone with Jacques Ferrand, who, in order not to alarm her, affected hardly to look at her, and told her, roughly, to go to bed; she avowed naively, that at night she was very much afraid of thieves, but that she was strong, resolute, and ready to defend herself.

"With what?" asked Jacques Ferrand.

"With this," answered the Creole, drawing from the ample woollen pelisse in which she was wrapped up a little dagger, of high finish, and which made the notary reflect.

Yet, persuaded that his new servant only feared robbers, he conducted her to the room she was to occupy (the former chamber of Louise). After having examined the localities, Cécily told him, trembling, with her eyes cast down, that, from fear, she would pass her night on a chair, because she saw on the door neither lock nor bolt.

Jacques Ferrand, already completely under the charm, but not wishing to awaken the suspicions of Cécily, said to her, in a cross tone, that she was a fool to have such fears; but he promised that the next day the bolt should be arranged.

The Creole did not go to bed.

In the morning the notary came to instruct her as to her duties. He intended to preserve, during the first day, a hypocritical reserve towards his new servant, in order to inspire her with confidence; but, struck with her beauty, which, in the broad daylight, seemed still more dazzling, blinded, and carried away by his feelings, he stammered forth some compliments on her figure and beauty.

She, with rare sagacity, had judged, from her first interview with the notary, that he was completely under the charm; at the avowal which he made of his *flame*, she thought she would at once throw off her feigned timidity, and change her mask. The Creole then assumed all at once a bold air. Jacques Ferrand went into new ecstasies on the beauty of features, and the enchanting figure of his new *bonne*.

"Look me full in the face," said Cécily, resolutely; "although dressed as an Alsatian peasant, do I look like a servant?"

"What do you mean to say?" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"Regard this hand—is it accustomed to rude labour?"

And she showed a white and charming hand,

with slender and delicate fingers, the long nails polished like agate, but of which the slightly-shaded crown betrayed the mixed blood.

"And this foot? is it a servant's foot?"

And she advanced a ravishing little foot, coquely "chaussée," which the notary had not yet remarked, and which he now only desisted from looking at, to regard Cécily with amazement.

"I have told my Aunt Pipelet just what suited me; she is ignorant of my past life; she thought I was reduced to this position by the death of my parents, and took me for a servant; but you have, I hope, too much sagacity to partake of her error, dear master?"

"And who are you, then?" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more surprised at this language.

"That is my secret. For reasons best known to myself, I have been obliged to leave Germany in this disguise. I wished to remain concealed at Paris for some time. My aunt, supposing me reduced to poverty, proposed to me to enter your service, spoke of your solitary manner of living, and told me that I would never be allowed to go out. I accepted quickly. Without knowing it, my aunt anticipated my most anxious desire. Who could look for and discover me here?"

"Conceal yourself! and what have you done, to be obliged to conceal yourself?"

"Soft offences, perhaps; but this is my secret."

"And what are your intentions, mademoiselle?"

"Always the same. Saving your significant compliments on my shape and beauty, I should not, perhaps, have made this avowal, which your penetration had sooner or later provoked. Listen to me, then, my dear master: I have accepted for the moment the condition, or, rather, the part of a servant; circumstances oblige me to do so. I shall have the courage to play this part to the end. I will submit to all the consequences. I will serve you with zeal, activity, and respect, to preserve my place; that is to say, a sure and unknown retreat. But at the least word of gallantry, at the least liberty you take with me, I leave you—not from prudery, nothing in me, I think, looks like the prude."

And she cast a glance charged with sensual electricity, which reached the very bottom of the notary's soul; he shuddered.

"No, I am not a prude," she resumed, with a provoking smile, which displayed her dazzling teeth: "Vive Dieu! when love bites me, the *bacchantes* are saints in comparison. But be just, and you will agree that your unworthy servant only wishes to perform honestly her duty as a servant. Now you know my secret, or at least a part of my secret; will you, perchance, act as a gentleman? Do I seem too handsome to serve you? Do you desire to change parts and become my slave? So be it! frankly, I prefer that, but always on this condition, that I shall never go out of the house, and you shall have for me the most paternal attention—that need not hinder you from saying that you find me charming: it shall be the recompense of your devotion and your discretion."

"The sole? the sole?" stammered Jacques Ferrand.

"The sole—unless solitude and the devil make me mad; which is impossible, for you will keep me company, and, in your quality as a holy man, you shall exorcise the evil spirit."

"Come, decide, no mixed position; either I will serve you, or you shall serve me; other-

wise, I leave your house, and I beg my aunt to find me *another place*. All this must seem strange to you; so be it; but if you take me for an adventurer, without the means of existence, you are wrong. In order to make my aunt my accomplice without her knowledge, I allowed her to think I was too poor to buy other clothes than these. Yet I have, you see, a purse well filled: on this side with gold, on the other with diamonds (and she showed the notary a long, red silk purse, filled with gold, and through the meshes of which shone precious stones). Unfortunately, all the money in the world could not give me a retreat as secure as your house, so isolated by the retirement in which you live. Accept, then, one or the other of my offers; you will render me a service. You see, I place myself at your discretion; for to tell you that I conceal myself, is to tell you I am sought for. But I am sure you will not betray me, even if you knew how to betray."

This romantic confidence, this sudden transformation of character, troubled the brain of Jacques Ferrand.

Who, was this woman? Why did she conceal herself? Had chance alone conducted her to his dwelling? If, on the contrary, she came there for some secret purpose, what was this purpose?

Among all the hypotheses which this singular adventure raised in the mind of the notary, the true motive of the Creole's presence never came to his thought. He had not, or, rather, he thought he had not, any other enemies than the victims of his licentiousness and cupidity. Now all of them were in such a condition of trouble or distress, that he could not suppose them capable of spreading a snare of which Cécily was the bait.

And then, again, for what purpose was it spread?

No, the sudden transformation of Cécily inspired but one fear to Jacques Ferrand: he thought that if this woman did not speak the truth, she was an adventurer, who, believing him rich, introduced herself into the house to cajole him, find him out, and perhaps cause him to marry her. But, although his avarice and cupidity revolted at the idea, he perceived, shuddering, that these suspicions, these reflections, were too late; for, with a single word, he could put his suspicions at rest by sending this woman away. And this word he did not speak. Already he loved her, after his manner, and passionately. Already the idea of seeing this seducing creature leave his house seemed to him impossible. Already, even, feeling the pangs of a savage jealousy to think that Cécily might bestow on others favours refused to him, he experienced some consolation in saying,

"As long as she is sequestered in my house, no one will possess her."

The boldness of language of this woman, the fire in her eyes, the provoking liberty of her manners, sufficiently revealed that she was not, as she said, a *prude*. This conviction, giving vague hopes to the notary, assured still more the empire of Cécily.

In a word, the licentiousness of Jacques Ferrand stifled the voice of cold reason; he abandoned himself blindly to the emotions which overwhelmed him.

It was agreed that Cécily should be his servant only in appearance: in this manner there would be no scandal; besides, to assure still

more the security of his guest, he would take no other domestic; he would himself serve her, and serve himself also; a neighbouring "traiter" could bring his repasts. He paid in money the breakfasts of his clerks, and the porter could take care of the office. Finally, the notary ordered to be promptly furnished a chamber on the first floor, according to Cécily's taste. She offered to pay the expense. He opposed it, and expended two thousand francs.

This generosity was enormous, and proved the unheard-of violence of his passion.

Then commenced for this wretch a strange life.

Shut up in the impenetrable solitude of his house, inaccessible to all, more and more under the yoke of his phrensiad love, no longer attempting to discover the secrets of this strange woman, from master he became a slave; he was the valet of Cécily—he served her at her repasts—he took care of her apartment. Informed by the baron that Louise had been surprised by a narcotic, the Creole only drank very pure water, only ate meals impossible to adulterate; she chose the chamber which she occupied, and assured herself that the walls concealed no secret doors.

Besides, Jacques Ferrand soon comprehended that Cécily was a woman not to be surprised with impunity. She was vigorous, agile, and dangerously armed.

Nevertheless, not to allow his passion to flag, the Creole seemed at times touched with his attentions, and flattered by the terrible domination she exercised over him. Then, supposing that by proofs of his devotion and self-denial he could make her forget age and ugliness, she delighted to paint in glowing colours * * *

At these words of a woman so young and so lovely, Jacques Ferrand felt sometimes his mind wandering; a devouring imagery pursued him, waking or sleeping. The ancient fable of the belt of Nessus was realized for him.

In the midst of these nameless tortures, he lost his health, appetite, and sleep.

Often, at night, in spite of cold or rain, he descended to his garden, and endeavoured, by a rapid walk, to calm his emotions.

At other times, during whole hours, he looked into the chamber where the Creole slept; for she had had the infernal "complaisance" to allow a wicket to be placed in her door, which she often opened—often, in order that she might almost cause him to lose his reason, so that she could then execute the orders she had received.

The decisive moment seemed to approach.

The chastisement of Ferrand became from day to day more worthy of his outrages.

He suffered all the torments of hell. By turns absorbed, lost, out of his mind, indifferent to his most serious interests, the maintenance of his reputation as an austere, grave, and pious man—a reputation usurped, but acquired by long years of dissimulation and cunning—he astonished his clerks by his aberrations, displeased his clients by his refusal to see them, and harshly kept at a distance the priests, who, deceived by his hypocrisy, had been, until then, his most fervent trumpeters. * * *

As we were saying, Cécily was arranging her head for the night before the glass.

At a slight noise coming from the corridor, she turned her face away from the door.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WICKET.

NOTWITHSTANDING the noise which she had just heard at her door, Cécily did not the less tranquilly continue her "toilette de nuit;" she drew from her "corsage," where it was placed like a busk, a dirk five or six inches long, in a case of black "chagrin," with a handle of black ebony fastened with silver, a very simple handle, but perfectly handy.

This was not a weapon of display.

Cécily took the dirk from its case with excessive precaution, and placed it on the marble chimneypiece; the blade, of the finest Damascus and the best temper, was triangular; its point, as sharp as a needle, had pierced a dollar without blunting it.

Impregated with a subtle and quick poison, the least wound from this poniard was mortal.

Jacques Ferrand, having one day doubted the dangerous properties of this weapon, the Creole made before him an experiment in *animâ viti*, that is to say, on the unfortunate dog of the house, who, slightly pricked in the nose, fell dead in horrible convulsions.

The dirk placed on the chimney, Cécily, taking off her spencer of black cloth, the shoulders, bosom, and arms remained naked like a woman in ball costume.

According to the custom of most girls of colour, she wore, instead of a corset, a second corsage of double linen, which was closely bound around her waist; her orange petticoat, remaining fastened under this kind of white "caneton" with short sleeves, composed thus a costume much less severe than the first, and harmonized wonderfully with the scarlet stockings, and the "madras" head-dress, so capriciously twisted around the head of the Creole. Nothing could be more pure, more beautiful, than the "contour" of her arms and shoulders, to which two little dimples gave a charm the more.

A profound sigh attracted the attention of Cécily. She smiled, in rolling around one of her ivory fingers some stray curls which escaped from the folds of her "madras."

"Cécily! Cécily!" murmured a voice, at once rude and plaintive.

And at the narrow opening of the wicket appeared the pale and flat face of Jacques Ferrand; his eyes sparkled in the shade.

Cécily, silent until then, began to sing softly in Creole, a Creole air. The words of this melody were soft and expressive. Although restrained, the noble *soubrette* of Cécily overpowered the noise of the torrents of rain and violent gusts of wind, which seemed to shake the old house to its foundation.

"Cécily! Cécily!" repeated Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

The Creole suddenly stopped, turned her head quickly, and appeared to hear, for the first time, the voice of the notary, and with "nonchalance" approached the door. "How! dear master, you are there!" said she with a slight foreign accent, which gave additional charm to her melodious voice.

"Oh! you are handsome!" murmured the notary.

"You think so!" answered the Creole: "this

'madras' suits well with my black hair, is it not so?"

"Every day I find you still more handsome."

"And my arm, see how white it is."

"Monster! go away! go away!" cried Jacques Ferrand, furiously.

Cécily laughed immoderately.

"No, no, it is to suffer too much! Oh! if I did not fear death!" cried the notary, in a hollow voice; "but to die—it is to renounce the sight of you, and you are so handsome. I prefer to suffer, and see you—"

"See me; this wicket is made for that, and, also, that we can talk as two friends, and thus charm our solitude; which, in truth, does not weigh heavily, you are so good a master! See what dangerous confessions I can make through this door."

"And this door, will you not open it! Yet see how submissive I am! to-night I might have tried to enter with you into your chamber—I did not."

"You are submissive for two reasons. In the first place, you know that being, from necessity, in the habit of wearing a dirk, I handle with a firm hand this venomous plaything, sharper than the tooth of a viper; you know, also, that on the day I have to complain of you, I shall leave forever this house, leaving you a thousand times more charmed, since you have been so gracious towards your unworthy servant as to be charmed with her." "My servant? it is I who am your slave—your slave, mocked, despised."

"It is true enough."

"And does not this touch you?"

"It amuses me. The days, and, above all, the nights, are so long." "Oh! the cursed—"

"No, seriously, you appear so completely bewildered, your features change so sensibly, that I am flattered. It is a poor triumph, but you are alone here."

"To hear that, and only be able to consume in powerless rage!" "How little wit you have! never, perhaps, have I said anything to you more tender."

"Scoff—scoff."

"I do not scoff; I have never seen a man of your age so much in love; and, it must be acknowledged, that a young and handsome man would be incapable of such mad passion. An Adonis admires himself as much as he admires us; he loves from the end of his teeth; and, then, to love him, what can be plainer! it is his due, hardly is he grateful; but to love a man like you, my master, oh! that would be to raise him from earth to heaven; it would be to accomplish his wildest dreams, his hopes, the most extravagant. For, in fine, the being who would say to you, 'You love Cécily madly; if I wish it, she shall be yours—you would believe such a being endowed with supernatural powers, would you not, dear master!'"

"Yes, oh! yes."

"Well! if you knew how to convince me better of your passion, I should have, perhaps, the 'bizarre' fantasy to play myself, in your favour, this supernatural part. Do you comprehend?"

"I comprehend that you scoff at me still, always, and without pity."

"Perhaps solitude creates such strange fantasies!"

Her tone of voice, until then, had been sardonic; but she pronounced these last words with a serious expression, and accompanied them by a glance which made the notary tremble. "Hush—do not look at me thus; you will make me mad. I prefer that you should say to me *never*; at least, I could abhor you, drive you from the house," cried Jacques Ferrand, who again abandoned his vain hopes. "Yes, for I expect nothing from you. But *wo* is me! *wo*! I know you now enough. You tell me to convince you of my love; do you not see how unhappy I am, *mon Dieu*! Yet I do all I can to please you. You wish to be concealed from every eye: I conceal you, perhaps at the risk of compromising myself; in fine, I do not know who you are; I respect your secret; I never speak to you about it. I have interrogated you on your past life; you have not answered me."

"Well! I was wrong; I am going to give you a mark of blind confidence. Oh! my master, listen to me."

"Once more a bitter pleasantry, is it not?"

"No, it is very serious. You must know, you should know, the history of her to whom you give such generous hospitality."

And Cécily added, in a tone of hypocritical and tearful compunction,

"The daughter of a brave soldier, brother of my Aunt Pipelet, I have received an education above my condition; I was seduced, then abandoned, by a rich young man. Then, to escape from the rage of my old father, I have fled my native country." Then, laughing heartily, Cécily added, "There, I hope, is a little story very 'présentable,' and, above all, very probable, for it has often been related. Amaze your curiosity with that, while waiting for some revelation more 'piquante.'"

"I was very sure that this was a cruel pleasantry," said the notary, with suppressed anger. "Nothing touches you, nothing; what must be done! speak, then, at least. I serve you like the meanest valet; for you I neglect my dearest interests; I know no more what I do. I am a subject of laughter for my clerks; my clients hesitate to leave me their business. I have broken with some pious people who used to visit me. I dare not think what the public say of this complete change in all my habits. But you do not know, no, you do not know the fatal consequences that my mad passion may have for me. See, now, the proofs of my devotion, my sacrifices. Do you wish more! speak! Is it gold you wish? The world thinks me richer than I am, but I—"

"What would you have me to do with your gold?" said Cécily, interrupting the notary, and shrugging her shoulders. "To reside in this chamber—what good would the gold do me! You have small invention!"

"But it is not my fault if you are a prisoner. Does this room displease you? Will you have it more magnificent? speak, command!"

"For what purpose; once more, for what purpose! Oh! if I expected here an adored being!"

"I would have gold, silk, flowers, perfumes, all the wonders of luxury; nothing could be too sumptuous, too enchanting."

"Well! these wonders of luxury; say a word, and—"

"For what purpose! for what purpose? What should I do with the frame without the picture? And the adored being, where is he? oh! my master!"

"It is true!" cried the notary, bitterly. "I am old. I am ugly. I can only inspire disgust and aversion; she loads me with contempt; she scoffs at me, and I have not the strength to drive her away. I have only strength to suffer."

"Oh! the insupportable *cry-baby*; oh! the silly 'personnage,' with his complaints," cried Cécily, in a sardonic and contemptuous tone; "he does nothing but groan and lament, and has been for ten days shut up alone with a young woman, in a deserted house."

"But this woman despises me—but this woman is armed—but this woman is locked up!" cried the notary, in a rage.

"Well! overcome the disdain of this woman; cause the dagger to fall from her hand; constrain her to open this door, which separates you from her; and that not by brutal force, she would be all-powerful."

"And how then?"

"By the force of your passion."

"Passion! and how can I inspire it! *mon Dieu*!"

"Stop, you are but a notary lined with a sacristan; you make me pity you. Am I to teach you your part? You are ugly; be terrible, your ugliness will be forgotten. You are old; be energetic, your age will be overlooked. You are repulsive; be threatening. Since you cannot be the noble horse, who neighs proudly in the midst of his wives, be not, at least, the stupid camel, who bends the knee and crooks the back; be a tiger. An old tiger, who roars in the midst of carnage, has also his beauty; his tigress answers him from the depths of the desert."

At this language, which was not without a sort of bold and natural eloquence, Jacques Ferrand shuddered, with the savage and almost ferocious expression of the face of Cécily, who, with heaving bosom, expanded nostril, haughty mouth, fixed on him her large black and burning eyes.

Never had she appeared so lovely.

"Speak, speak again!" cried he, passionately; "you speak seriously this time. Oh! if I could—"

"One can do what one wishes," said Cécily, abruptly.

"But—"

"But I tell you that if you wish, repulsive as you are—"

"Yes, I will do it! Try me, try me!" cried Jacques Ferrand, more and more excited.

Cécily continued approaching nearer, and fixing on the notary a penetrating look,

"For this woman would well know," resumed the Creole, "that she would have an exorbitant caprice to satisfy; that these 'beaux-fils' would look at their money if they had any, or, if they had none, to a mean trick, while the old tiger—"

"Would regard nothing—he—do you understand? nothing. Fortune, honour, he would know how to sacrifice all, he!"

"True," said Cécily, placing her charming fingers on the bony and hairy hands of Jacques

Ferrand; who, for the first time, touched the soft and velvet skin of the Creole.

He became still paler, and uttered a hoarse sigh.

"How this woman would be beloved!" added Cécily, "had she an enemy, whom, pointing out to her old tiger, she would say strike, and—"

"And he would strike," cried Jacques Ferrand, endeavouring to approach the ends of her fingers to his withered lips.

"True, the old tiger would strike," said the Creole, placing her hand softly on his.

"If you would love me," cried the wretch, "I believe I would commit a crime."

"Hold, master," said Cécily, suddenly withdrawing her hand; "in your turn go away, go away, I know you no more; you do not appear to me so ugly now as before; go away."

She retired quickly from the wicket.

The detestable creature knew how to give to her gestures and to her last words an accent of truth so incredible; her look, at once surprised and annoyed seemed to express so naturally her spite at having for a moment forgotten the ugliness of Jacques Ferrand, that he, transported with phrenzied hope, cried, clinging to the bars of the wicket, "Cécily, return, command, I will be your tiger!"

"No, no, master," said Cécily, retreating still farther from the wicket; "and to lay the devil who tempts me—I am going to sing a song of my country. Master, do you hear? without the wind redoubles, the tempest is unchained; what a fine night for two lovers, seated side by side near a sparkling fire!"

"Cécily, return!" cried Jacques Ferrand, in a supplicating tone.

"No, no, presently, when I can without danger; but the light from this lamp hurts my eyes, a soft languor weighs down my eyelids. I do not know what emotion agitates me; a demi-obscure will please me more; one would say I am in the twilight of pleasure."

And Cécily went towards the chimney, put out the lamp, took a guitar suspended on the wall, and stirred the fire, whose blaze illuminated this large room.

From the narrow wicket where he remained immovable, such was the picture which Jacques Ferrand perceived: In the midst of the luminous horizon formed by the undulating light of the fire, Cécily, in a position "pleine de mollesse et abandon," half reclining on a vast divan of garnet satin, held a guitar, from whence she drew some harmonious preludes.

The blazing hearth shed its rosy light on the Creole, who appeared brilliantly 'éclairée,' in the midst of the obscurity of the rest of the apartment.

To complete the effect of this picture, let the reader recall to his mind the mysterious and almost fantastic appearance of a room where the fire-light struggles with the long, dark shadows which tremble on the ceiling and walls.

The storm redoubled its violence, its roaring could be heard from within.

While preluding on her guitar, Cécily fixed her magnetic glances on Jacques Ferrand, who, fascinated, could not withdraw.

"Hold, master," said the Creole, "listen to a song of my country; we do not know how to make verses; we use a simple recitative, with-

out rhyme, and at each pause we improvise a couplet appropriate to the subject; it is very pastoral; it will please you, I am sure, master. This song is called the 'Femme Amoureuse;' it is she who speaks."

And Cécily commenced a kind of recitative, much more accented by the expression of the voice than by the modulations of the song. A few soft and trembling cords served as an accompaniment.

This was the song of Cécily:

Flowers, everywhere flowers.

My lover comes! The hope of happiness snatches and destroys.

Softly the light of day—pleasure seeks a lucid darkness.

To the fresh perfumes of flowers my love prefers my warm breath.

The glare of day shall not wound his eyes, for I will keep them closed by my kisses.

My angel, come! My heart beats; my blood burns!

Come, come, come!

These words, chanted with as much ardour as if she had addressed an invisible lover, were, thus to speak, translated by the Creole into a theme of enchanting melody; her charming fingers drew from her guitar sounds full of delicious harmony.

The animated face of Cécily, her veiled and moistened eyes, constantly fixed on those of Jacques Ferrand, expressed all the languor of the song.

Words of love; intoxicating music; inflamed looks; silence; night! all conspired at this moment to disturb the reason of the notary.

Thus "eperdu" he cried:

"Mercy! Cécily! mercy! I shall go wild! Hush! it is to die! Oh! that I were mad!"

"Listen then to the second couplet," said the Creole, preluding anew.

And she continued her passionate recitative:

If my lover were there, and with his hand touched my soft neck, I should shudder and die.

If he were there, and his hair touched my cheek, my cheek so pale would become red.

My cheek so pale would be as fire.

Life of my soul, if you were there, my parched lips could not speak.

Life of my life, if you were there—expiring—I would ask no mercy.

Those whom I love as I love you, I kill.

My angel, come! Oh! come! My heart beats; my blood burns!

Come, come, come!

If the Creole had accented the first stanza with a voluptuous languor, she poured into these last words all the transports of "l'amour antique."

And, as if the music had been powerless to express her wild delirium, she threw the guitar aside, and half rising from the couch, and extending her arms towards the door, she repeated, in an expiring, languishing voice,

"Oh! come, come, come!"

To paint the electric look with which she accompanied these words would be impossible.

Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible cry.

"Oh! death—death to him you love so much, to whom you have addressed these words!" cried he, shaking the door in a transport of jealousy.

Active as a tigress, with one bound Cécily was at the wicket, and, as if she had with difficulty dispelled her feigned transports, she said to Jacques Ferrand, in a low, palpitating voice: "Well! I avow it. * * * * * I did not wish to return to the door. I am here—

in spite of myself; for I fear your words spoken just now. *If you say strike—I will strike.* You love me well, then?"

"Do you wish gold—all my gold?"

"No; I have enough."

"Have you an enemy? I kill him."

"I have no enemy."

"Will you be my wife? I will espouse you."

"I am married."

"But what do you wish, then! Mon Dieu! what do you wish?"

"Prove to me that your passion for me is blind, furious, that you will sacrifice everything for me!"

"All! yes, all! But how?"

"I do not know; but there was a moment the glance of your eye bewildered me. If now, now, you give me some proof of your love. I do not know of what I should be capable! Hasten! I am capricious; to-morrow the impression of this hour will perhaps be effaced."

"But what proof can I give you on the moment?" cried the wretch. "It is an atrocious torment! What proof! Speak! What proof?"

"You are only a fool!" answered Cécily, retreating from the wicket with an appearance of extreme irritation. "I am mistaken! I thought you capable of energetic devotion! Good-night. It is a pity—"

"Cécily! oh! do not go—return. But what must I do? tell me, at least. Oh! my senses wander. What must I do? what do?"

"Seek." "Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

* * * * *

"But, in fine—speak! what do you wish?" cried the notary, quite beside himself.

"Guess." "Explain—command."

"Ah! if you love me as passionately as you say, you will find the means. Good-night."

"Cécily!" "I am going to shut this wicket—instead of opening the door—"

* * * "Mercy! listen—remain—I have found—"

cried Jacques Ferrand, after a moment's pause, with an expression of joy impossible to describe. The wretch was seized with a vertigo.

* * *

He lost all prudence, all reserve; the instinct of moral preservation abandoned him.

"Well! this proof of your love!" said the Creole: who, having approached the chimney, took hold of her pogniard, and returned slowly towards the wicket.

Then, without being seen by the notary, she assured herself of the action of a small chain, one end of which was fastened to the door, the other to the doorpost.

"Listen," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hoarse and broken voice; "listen. If I place my honour, my fortune, my life, at your mercy—here—on the spot—will you then believe I love you? This proof of an insane passion, will it suffice?"

"Your honour, your fortune, your life? I do not comprehend." "If I confide to you a secret which would place me on the scaffold?"

"You—criminal! You jest. And your austerity?" "A lie!" "Your probity?" "A lie."

"Your piety?" "A lie." "You pass for a saint, and you would be a demon! You are a boaster! No; there is no man quite cunning enough, bold enough, thus to insinuate himself into the confidence and respect of men. It would be a frightful defiance cast in the face of society."

"I am this man! I have thrown this taunt, this defiance, in the teeth of society!" cried the monster, in an access of frightful pride.

"Jacques! Jacques! do not speak thus," said Cécily. "Hold—you will make me mad!"

"My head for your love—do you wish it?"

"Ah! this is love, now!" cried Cécily. "Here—take my poniard; you disarm me."

Jacques Ferrand took, through the wicket, the dangerous weapon with precaution, and threw it from him in the corridor.

"Verily—you believe me, then!" cried he in transport.

"If I believe you?" said the Creole, leaning with force her charming hands on those of Jacques Ferrand.

"Yes, I believe you; for I see again your look of just now—that look which fascinated me. Your eyes sparkle with savage ardour. Jacques, I love your eyes!"

"Cécily!!!"

"You should speak the truth."

"If I speak the truth! Oh! you shall see." "Your countenance is lowering. Your expression formidable. Hold, you are as fearful and beautiful as a mad tiger. But you speak the truth, do you not?"

"I have committed crimes, I tell you."

"So much the better, if by their avowal you prove your love."

"And if I tell you all?"

"I grant all; for if you have this blind confidence in me—do you see, Jacques—it will no longer be the ideal lover of the song I call. It is to you, my tiger, you, that I shall say come—come—come."

* * * * *

"Oh, you will be mine. I shall be your tiger," cried he; "and then, if you will, you shall dishonour me—my head shall fall. My honour, my life, all is yours now."

"Your honour?"

"My honour! Listen: ten years since an infant was confided to my care, and two hundred thousand francs for its support; I have abandoned this child. I spread the report the child was dead, and I kept the money."

"It was bold and skilful—who would have thought it of you?"

"Listen again: I hated my cashier. One night he took from me a little gold, which he returned the next day; but to ruin him, I accused him of having robbed me of a considerable sum. I was believed, he was thrown into prison. Now my honour, is it at your mercy?"

"Oh! you love me, Jacques, you love me. To inform me thus your secrets—what empire have I, then, over you? I will not be ungrateful; let me kiss this forehead, where so many infernal thoughts were created."

"Oh!" cried the notary, stammering, "let the scaffold stand there, ready, I would not draw back. Listen again: This child, once abandoned, crosses my path—she inspires me with fears; I have had her killed!"

"You! And how? where?"

"A few days since—near the 'Pont d'Asnières,' at the Island of the Ravageur. One Martial drowned her in a boat, a scoupe. Are these details sufficient? do you believe me?"

"Oh! demon from hell! you alarm, yet attract me. You inspire me. What is, then, your power?"

"Listen again: Before that, a man had confided to me a hundred thousand 'écus.' I set a trap for him. I blew his brains out. I proved that he committed suicide, and I denied the deposit, which his sister reclaimed. Now my life is at your mercy—open."

"Jacques, hold, I adore you!" said the Creole, with warmth.

"Oh! come a thousand deaths, and I have them!" cried the notary, in an intoxication impossible to describe.

"Yes, you are right; were I young and charming, I should not experience this triumphant joy. The key! throw me the key! draw the bolt!"

The Creole took the key from the lock, and handed it to the notary through the wicket, saying, "Jacques, I am mad!"

"You are mine, at length!" cried she, with a savage roar, turning the key in the lock.

But the door, fastened with a bolt, did not open.

"Come, my tiger! come," said Cécily, in an expiring voice.

"The bolt! the bolt!" cried Jacques Ferrand.

"But if you deceive me," cried the Creole, suddenly, "if these secrets are an invention, to cajole me—"

The notary remained for a moment struck with stupor: he thought he had succeeded; this last difficulty raised his impatient fury to its climax.

He thrust his hand quickly in his bosom, opened his waistcoat, broke with violence a small chain of steel, to which was suspended a small, thin portfolio, took it, and showing it through the wicket to Cécily, he said, in an oppressed and breathless tone,

"Here is what would cause my head to fall: draw the bolt—the portfolio is yours."

"Give it to me, my tiger," cried Cécily.

And hastily drawing the bolt with one hand, with the other she seized the portfolio.

But Jacques Ferrand did not abandon it until at the moment he felt the door ceding to his efforts.

But if the door ceded, it was only for about six inches, confined, as it was, by the chain above mentioned. At this unforeseen obstacle, Jacques Ferrand threw himself against the door, and shook it with a desperate effort. Cécily, with the rapidity of thought, took the portfolio between her teeth, opened the window, threw a cloak into the court, and with great dexterity making use of a cord previously fastened to the balcony, she let herself down into the court, as rapidly and lightly as an arrow falls to the ground.

Then, wrapping herself up in haste in the mantle, she ran to the porter's lodge, opened it, drew the cord, went out into the street, and jumped into a carriage, which, since her residence at Jacques Ferrand's, was sent every night by order of the Baron de Graun, and stationed not twenty steps from the notary's mansion.

This carriage was quickly driven off, drawn by two stout horses. It reached the boulevard before Jacques Ferrand had perceived the flight of Cécily.

Let us return to this monster.

Through the opening of the door it was impossible for him to see the window by which

the Creole had escaped. With one mighty effort with his large shoulders, he burst the chain which confined the door, and rushed into the chamber, and found no one.

The cord danced in the wind, as he leaned from the balcony. Then, from the other side of the court, by the light of the moon, which burst forth at intervals from the driving clouds, he saw the "porte cochère" open.

In a moment he divined everything.

A last ray of hope remained.

Vigorous and determined, he sprang over the balcony, using the cord in his turn, lowered himself into the court, and rushed out of the house.

The street was deserted—he was alone.

He heard no other noise than the distant rolling of the carriage which was rapidly carrying off the Creole. The notary thought it was some belated vehicle, and attached no importance to this circumstance.

Thus, for him no chance remained of finding Cécily, who carried with her the proofs of his crimes!!!

At this frightful certainty, he fell, thunder-struck, at the door of his house.

He remained there a long time, dumb, immovable, petrified. With haggard eyes, fixed, his teeth compressed, his mouth foaming, tearing mechanically with the nails his breast, he felt his reason totter, and was lost in an abyss of darkness. When he awoke from his stupor, he walked heavily, and with an ill-assumed step; objects trembled in his sight; he felt as if recovering from a fit of intoxication.

He shut with violence the door of the street, and re-entered the court. The rain had ceased.

The wind continued to blow with violence, chasing the heavy-laden clouds, which veiled, without concealing, the light of the moon.

Slightly calmed by the brisk and cold air of the night, Jacques Ferrand, hoping to combat his internal agitation by the rapidity of his walk, plunged into the obscure allees of his garden, marching with rapid strides, and from time to time striking his forehead with his clinched fists.

Walking thus at hazard, he reached the end of an allée near a greenhouse in ruins.

Suddenly he stumbled violently against a mound of earth newly raised. He stooped, and looked mechanically on some linen stained with blood.

He was near the grave where Louise Morel buried her dead child. Her child—who was also the child of Jacques Ferrand.

Notwithstanding his obduracy, notwithstanding the frightful fears which agitated him, Jacques Ferrand shuddered with alarm.

There was something supernatural in this "rapprochement." Pursued by the avenging punishment of his *vice*, chance carried him to the grave of his child—unhappy fruit of his violence and of his lewdness. Under any other circumstances, Jacques Ferrand had trampled on this sepulchre with atrocious indifference; but having exhausted his savage energy in the scene we have related, he was seized with a weakness and sudden alarm. His face was covered with an icy sweat, his trembling knees shook under him, and he fell lifeless across this open tomb.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LA FORCE.

Erreur inexplicable ! erreur injuste !
Erreur cruelle !—WOLFRANG, liv. ii.

PERHAPS we shall be reproached when the time consumed in the following discursion from the scenes and events of our story is reverted to; but it seems to us important that questions relative to our penitentiary system should be brought to the notice, consideration, and perhaps resolution of our legislators. The interior of a prison is a frightful pandemonium—a sad thermometer of the state of society, and an instructive study.*

In a word, the varied physiognomies of all classes of prisoners, the relations of family or affection which connects them still to the world, from which the prison walls separate them, have appeared to us worthy of regard.

The reader will, then, excuse us for having grouped around several of the prisoners, personages known in this tale, and other secondary figures, destined to place in active relief, certain critical events necessary to complete this initiation into a *prison life*.

* * * * *

Let us enter *La Force*.

There is nothing gloomy, nothing sinister in the aspect of this house of detention.

In the middle of one of the first courts are to be seen some mounds of earth, planted with shrubbery, at the foot of which are already shooting forth some precocious cowslips and snowdrops; a trellised doorway leads to one of the seven or eight promenades destined for the prisoners.

The vast buildings surrounding this court resemble much a barrack or manufactory, kept with extreme neatness. They are built of white stone, with lofty windows, in order to allow a free circulation of air. The steps and pavement of the yard are of scrupulous cleanliness. On the ground floor, vast saloons, heated during winter, and well aired during summer, serve during the day as a place for conversation, workshops, or refectories for the prisoners. The upper stories are used as immense sleeping apartments, ten or twelve feet in height, with neat and shining floors; they are furnished with two rows of iron bedsteads, excellent beds, composed of a "pailasse," a soft and thick mattress, a bolster, sheets of white linen, and a warm woollen covering.

At the sight of these accommodations, uniting all the requisites of comfort and salubrity; a stranger is much surprised, accustomed as he is to suppose all prisons as sorrowful, dirty, unhealthy, and gloomy.

He is mistaken.

That which is sad, dirty, and gloomy will be found in the holes where, like Morel, the jeweller, so many poor and honest workmen languish exhausted, forced to abandon their beds to their infirm wives, and to leave with powerless despair their half starving, naked children, struggling with the cold in the infectious straw.

There is some contrast between the physiognomies of the inhabitants of these two dwellings.

* Observe—the author is at variance with the penal code of France.

Incessantly occupied with the wants of his family, to whom the day is hardly long enough, seeing a mad perversity reducing his salary, the artisan will be cast down and worn out; the hour of repose will not be sound to him; a kind of sleeplike lassitude alone interrupts his daily toil. Then, on awakening from this mournful drowsiness, he will find himself overwhelmed with the same racking thoughts of the present, with the same inquietudes for the morrow.

But if, hardened by vice, indifferent to the past, happy with the present, certain of the future (he can assure himself of it by an offence or crime), regretting his liberty, without doubt, but finding large compensation in the personal well-being he enjoys, certain to carry away with him on his release a good sum of money, gained by moderate and easy labour, esteemed, or, may be, feared by his companions, either for his impudence or perversity, the convict, on the contrary, will be almost always careless and gay.

Once more: what does he want?

Does he not find in prison a good shelter, good bed, good food, good pay, easy labour, and, above all and before all, a *society to his taste*; a society, let us repeat, which measures his merit by the magnitude of his offences?

A hardened criminal, then, knows neither misery, hunger, nor cold. What matters to him the horror he inspires to honest men?

He does not see them—he knows none.

His crimes are his glory—his influence, his strength with the bandits among whom he will henceforth pass his life. How shall he fear shame?

Instead of grave and charitable remonstrances, which might force him to blush and to repent, he hears savage plaudits, which encourage him to robbery and murder. Scarcely imprisoned, he meditates new misdeeds.

What is more logical?

If he is discovered, arrested anew, he will find repose, the personal well-being of the prison, and his joyous and bold companions in crime and debauchery.

Is his corruption less great than that of the others? does he manifest, on the contrary, the slightest remorse that he is exposed to atrocious railings, infernal shouts, terrible threats?

In fine—a thing so rare that it has become an exception to the rule—should a condemned come out of this frightful pandemonium with the firm resolution to reform by prodigies of labour, courage, patience, and honesty, has he been able to conceal his past offences? A meeting with one of his old prison companions would be sufficient to overturn his plan of reformation so carefully designed.

And in this way—

A hardened libéré proposes an *affair* to a repentant libéré; the latter, in spite of dangerous threats, refuses this criminal association; immediately an anonymous communication strips the veil from the past life of this unfortunate, who wishes, at every sacrifice, to conceal and expiate a first fault by honourable conduct.

Then, exposed to the contempt, or, at least, the suspicion of those whose interest he had obtained by force of industry and probity, reduced to distress, soured by injustice, carried away by want, yielding, in fine, to these fatal dera-

lictions, this man, almost restored, falls back again, and forever, to the bottom of the abyss from whence he had with so much difficulty escaped.

In the following scenes we shall endeavour, then, to show the monstrous and inevitable consequences of *la réclusion en commun* (promiscuous confinement.)

After ages of barbarous proofs and pernicious doubts, it begins to be understood how unreasonable it is to plunge into an atmosphere abominably vitiated people whom a pure and salubrious air might have saved.

How much time shall be required to find out that, to associate gangrened beings is to redouble the intensity of their corruption, which thus becomes incurable!

How long to find out that there is but one remedy to this growing leprosy, which threatens the *body social*!

Solitary confinement!

We should esteem ourselves happy if our feeble voice could be, if not counted, at least heard, among all those which, more imposing, more eloquent than ours, demand, with so just and so impatient an importunity, the complete, absolute adoption of the *solitary system*.

Some day also, perhaps, society will know that evil is an accidental, not organic malady; that criminals are almost always good in substance, but false and wicked through ignorance, selfishness, or negligence of those governing; and that the health of the soul, like that of the body, is invincibly subordinate to the laws of a 'hygiène' at once salubrious and preservative.

God gives to all along with healthful organs, energetic appetites, and the desire of comfort; it is for society to modify and satisfy these wants.

The man who only has as his share strength, good-will, and health, has the *right*, sovereign *right*, to a labour justly remunerated, which will assure him, not the superfluities, but the necessities of life, the means to be healthy and robust, active and industrious, therefore honest and virtuous, because his condition will be happy.

The dismal regions of misery and ignorance are peopled with beings of sorrowful hearts. Cleanse these sewers, spread there the inclination to labour, equitable salaries, just rewards, and soon these sickly faces, these broken hearts, will be brought back to virtue, which is the life and health of the soul.

* * * * *

We will conduct the reader to the "parloir" of the prison of *La Force*.

It is an obscure apartment, separated in its whole length into two equal parts by a narrow, railed passage.

One part of this parloir communicates with the interior of the prison; it is destined for the prisoners.

The other communicates with the office; it is destined to strangers admitted to visit the prisoners.

These interviews and these conversations take place through the double grating of iron in the "parloir," in presence of a guardian, who remains inside, and at the extremity of the passage.

The appearance of the prisoners, assembled in the "parloir" on this day, offered numerous

contrasts: some were covered with wretched vestments; some seemed to belong to the working class; others, again, to the rich "bourgeoisie."

The same contrast of condition was observable among the persons who came to see the prisoners; they were almost all of them women. Generally the prisoners appear less sad than the visitors; for, strange as it may appear, it is proved by experience, there are few sorrows and little shame which resist three or four days of *imprisonment passed in common*!

Those who are the most alarmed at this hideous communion are soon habituated; the contagion reaches them; surrounded by degraded beings, hearing only infamous words, a kind of ferocious emulation drags them on, and, either to impose upon their companions by rivaling their obduracy, or to stupify themselves by this moral intoxication, almost always the newly-arrived show as much depravity and insolent gaiety as the habitués of the prison.

Let us return to the parloir.

Notwithstanding the humming noise of a great number of conversations carried on in a low tone, from one side of the "coulir" to the other, prisoners and visitors succeeded, after some practice, in being able to converse among themselves—on the absolute condition not to allow themselves, for a moment, to be distracted or occupied with the conversation of their neighbours, which created a kind of secret in the midst of all this noisy exchange of words, each one being forced to hear, but not to listen, to a word of that which was spoken around him.

Among the prisoners summoned to the parloir by visitors, and the farthest from the place where the guardian was seated, was Nicolas Martial.

To the sad state of dejection in which we left him, at the time of his arrest, had succeeded impudent assurance. Already the contagious and detestable influence of the prison in *common* bore its fruits.

Without doubt, if he had been immediately transferred to a solitary cell, this wretch, still under the blow of his first detection, the thought of his crimes constantly before him, alarmed at the punishment which awaited him, this wretch might have experienced, if not repentance, at least a salutary alarm, from which nothing might have distracted him.

And who knows what effect may be produced on a criminal by an incessant, forced meditation on the crimes which he had committed, and their punishment?

Far from this, thrown into the midst of a crowd of bandits in whose eyes the least sign of repentance is cowardice, or, rather, *treason*, which they cause to be dearly expiated; for, in their savage obduracy, in their senseless distrust, they look upon as a spy every man (if there should be such a one) who, sad and mournful, regretting his fault, does not partake of their audacious thoughtlessness, and shudders at their contact.

Thrown among the bandits, Nicolas Martial, knowing, for a long time and by tradition, the manners and ways of prisons, overcame his weakness, and wished to appear worthy of a name already celebrated in the annals of robbery and murder.

Some old "repris de justice" had known his father, the executed; others, his brother, the galley-slave; he was received and immediately patronized by these veterans in crime, with savage interest.

This paternal reception from murderer to murderer exalted the son of the widow; these praises bestowed on the hereditary perversity of his family intoxicated him. Soon forgetting, in this hideous thoughtlessness, the future which menaced him, he only remembered his past misdeeds but to exaggerate them and glorify himself in the eyes of his companions. The expression, then, of his face, was as impudent as that of the visitor's was uneasy and concerned. This individual was the Père Micou, the receiver of the Passage de la Brasserie, to whose house Madame de Fermont and her daughter, victims of the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand, had been obliged to retire.

The Père Micou knew to what punishment he was subject, for having several times acquired, at a miserable price, the fruits of Nicolas's robberies, and of several others.

The son of the widow being arrested, the receiver found himself almost at the discretion of the bandit, who could point him out as his habitual purchaser. Although this accusation might not be sustained by flagrant proofs, it was not the less very dangerous for the Père Micou: thus, had he immediately executed the orders which Nicolas had sent him by a prisoner, whose time had expired.

"Eh bien! how do you get on, Père Micou?" said the brigand.

"To serve you, my good fellow," answered the receiver, eagerly. "As soon as I saw the person you sent me, right away I—"

"Stop! why do you not *tutayer** me any more, Père Micou?" said Nicolas, interrupting him, with a sardonic air. "Is it that you despise me because I am in prison?"

"No, mon garçon, I despise no one," said the receiver, who did not care to make public his past familiarity with this wretch.

"Eh bien! then say *thou* to me, as usual, or I shall believe you have no friendship for me, and that would break my heart." "A la bonne heure," said Père Micou, sighing. "I have busied myself with all your little commissions."

"Well spoken, Père Micou; I knew well that you would not forget friends. And my tobacco!"

"I have left two pounds at the office, mon garçon."

"Is it good?" "None better."

"And the gammon?" "Also left there a four-pound loaf of bread: I have added a little surprise you did not expect—half a dozen hard eggs and a fine Holland cheese."

"That is what I call to act like a friend! And wine?"

"There are six bottles of sealed; but, you know, they will only give you one bottle a day."

"What would you have? one ought to be content with that."

"I hope you are satisfied with me, mon garçon?"

"Certainly; and shall be still, and shall be again, Père Micou, for this gammon, this cheese,

these eggs, and this wine, will only last the time to swallow them; but, as they say when there is no more, there will come some more, thanks to Papa Micou, who will give me some more sugar-plums, if I am a good boy."

"How! you wish—"

"That, in two or three days, you will renew my little provisions, Père Micou."

"May the devil burn me if I do—it is good for once."

"Good for once! Come, come; ham and wine are good always, you know that well enough."

"It is possible—but I am not obliged to feed you with dainties."

"Ah! Père Micou! it is wrong, it is unjust, to refuse ham to me, who has so often brought you *gras double*."

"Hush! now, malheureux!" said the alarmed receiver.

"No; I'll make the *curieux* (judge) decide; I will tell him. Imagine that the Père Micou—"

"It is good, it is good!" cried the receiver, seeing, with as much fear as anger, Nicolas disposed to abuse the position which their dealings gave him; "I consent—I will replenish your stock of provisions when they are exhausted." "It is just—nothing but just. Neither must you forget to send some coffee to my mother and Calebasse, who are at Saint Lazare; they used to take their cup every morning—they will feel the want of it."

"Still more? but, do you wish to ruin me, 'gredin'?"

"As you please, Père Micou: let us speak no more about it. I will ask the *curieux* if—"

"Agreed, then, for the coffee," said the receiver, interrupting him. "But, may the devil take you! cursed be the day in which I knew you!"

"My old man, as for me, it is just the contrary. At this moment, I am delighted to know you. I venerate you as my foster-father." "I hope that you have nothing more to order?" answered the Père Micou, with bitterness.

"Yes! you shall tell my mother and sister that, if I trembled when I was arrested, I tremble no more, and that I am now as bold as both of them."

"I will tell them. Is this all?"

"Stop! I forgot to ask for two pair of warm-woblen stockings—you do not wish me to take cold, do you?"

"I wish you might burst!"

"Thank you, Père Micou, that shall be later; at present, I prefer something else. I wish to pass it calmly—at least, if they do not make me a head shorter, like father, I shall have enjoyed life."

"Your life is very pleasant!"

"It is superb! Since I have been here, I have amused myself like a king. If there had been lamps and guns, there would have been an illumination and a *feu-de-joie* in my honour, when it was known that I was the son of the famous Martial, the 'guillotiné'!"

"If is touching. Beautiful relationship!"

"Hold! there are many dukes and marquises; why, then, should we not have our nobility among ourselves?" said the brigand, with savage irony.

"Yes, it is *Charlot* (executioner) who gives.

* *Tutayer*, to use thou instead of you.

you your letters of nobility in the 'Place du Palais.'"

"Very sure that it is not Monsieur le Curé. So much the more reason in prison one should be of the nobility of *la haute pègre* (great robbers), otherwise you are looked upon as a nobody. You ought to see how they treat those who are not *nobles de pègre*, and who do their—hold! there is one here named Germain, a small young man, who plays the disgusted, and seems to despise us. Let him take care of his skin. He is a *sournois*; he is suspected of being a *mouton*. If this is so, they will slit his nose, by way of warning."

"Germain? This young man is called Germain?"

"Yes. You know him! He is, then, of *la pègre*, notwithstanding his innocent looks!"

"I do not know him. But if it is the Germain of whom I have heard speak, his account is good."

"How?" "He once escaped a snare which Velu and the Gros-Boiteux laid for him."

"Why did they do it?"

"I don't know. They said that in *Provence* he had *coqué* (denounced) some one of their band."

"I was sure of it. Germain is a *mouton*. Well! they eat mutton. I will tell this to my friends; that will give them an appetite. Ah, ça! The Gros-Boiteux, does he still play tricks on your lodgers?"

"Dieu merci, I am rid of this villain! you will see him here to-day or to-morrow."

"Vive la joie! we shall have a laugh! Here is another one who never looks glum!"

"It is because he is going to meet Germain here that I said his account was good—if he is the same—"

"And why has he been nabbed, the Gros-Boiteux?"

"For a robbery committed with a liberated prisoner, who wished to remain honest and labour. Oh yes! the Gros-Boiteux nicely fixed him; he is so wicked, that 'gueux.' I am sure it was he who forced the trunk of those two women who occupy the cabinet of the fourth floor."

"What women? Ah! yes; two women, the youngest of whom you found so handsome, old brigand."

"Ah, yes; but it is all over with her; for, at this present moment, the mother must be dead, and the daughter not far from it. I shall be in for two weeks' lodgings; but may the devil burn me if I give a rag to bury them! I have had losses enough, without counting the 'douceurs' which you *beg* me to give to you and your family. This would nicely arrange my business. I have luck this year!"

"Bah, bah! you are always complaining, Père Micou; you are as rich as Crépus. When you come to bring me some more provisions, you can give me some news of my mother and Calebasse!"

"Yes; it must be so."

"Ah! I forget, while you are there, buy me also a new cap, of plaid velvet, with a tassel; mine is no longer fit to be worn."

"Ah ça! decidedly—you wish to laugh!"

"No, Père Micou, I want a cap of plaid velvet; it is my notion." "But you are determined, then, to make me sleep on straw?"

"Come, Père Micou, don't get warm; it is yes or no; I do not force you. But enough."

The receiver, reflecting that he was at the mercy of Nicolas, arose, fearing to be assailed with new demands if he prolonged his visit.

"You shall have your cap," said he; "but take care, if you ask me for anything more, I shall give nothing; happen what may, you will lose as much as I."

"Be tranquil, Père Micou; I shall not *make* you *sing* any more than is necessary for you to preserve your voice; for this would be a pity; you *sing* well."

The receiver went out, shrugging his shoulders with rage, and the guardian reconducted Nicolas into the prison. At the moment the Père Micou left the "parloir," Rigolette entreated.

The guardian, a man of forty years, an old soldier of energetic appearance, was dressed in a jacket, cap, and trousers of blue cloth; two silver stars were embroidered on the collar and lapels of his coat.

At the sight of the grisette the face of this man brightened up, and assumed an expression of affectionate benevolence. He had always been struck with the grace, gentility, and touching goodness with which Rigolette consoled Germain when she came to the "parloir" to converse with him. Germain, on his part, was no ordinary prisoner. His reserve, his mildness, and his sadness, inspired a lively interest in the officers of the prison; an interest they were careful not to show him, for fear of exposing him to the bad treatment of his vicious companions, who, as we have said, regarded him with suspicious hatred.

It rained in torrents, but, thanks to her over-shoes and umbrella, Rigolette had courageously braved the wind and rain.

"What a horrible day, my poor demoiselle!" said the guardian to her, kindly. "You must have had a good deal of courage to come out such a time as this, at least!"

"When one is thinking, all along the way, of the pleasure they are going to give a poor prisoner, one does not pay much attention to the weather, monsieur!"

"I have no need to ask you who you came to see."

"Surely not. And how is he, my poor Germain?"

"Look here, my dear demoiselle; I have seen many prisoners; they were sad, sad one day, two days, and by degrees they fell in with the rest, and the most sorrowful at first often became the most gay. M. Germain is not so; he appears to grow sadder every day."

"It is this that troubles me."

"When I am on service in the courts, I look at him from the corner of my eye; he is always alone. I have already told you, you should advise him not to act thus, but to speak to his comrades, otherwise he will become their butt. The yards are watched, but—a blow is soon made!"

"Ah! mon Dieu! monsieur! is there still more danger for him?" cried Rigolette.

"Not precisely; but these bandits see he is not one of them, and they hate him because he appears honest and proud." "Yet I have advised him to do what you have told me, monsieur, to endeavour to converse with the least

wicked; but it is too much for him; he cannot overcome his repugnance."

"He is wrong—wrong; a quarrel is soon got up."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! can he not be separated from the others?"

"Since I have seen, for two or three days past, their evil intentions towards him, I have advised him to place himself in what we call *à la pistole*, that is to say, in a room by himself."

"Well!"

"I did not think of one thing. A whole range of cells are comprised in the repairs now going on in the prison, and the others are occupied."

"But these bad men are capable of killing him!" cried Rigolette, with her eyes filled with tears. "And if by chance he had some persons interested in his fate, what could they do for him, monsieur?"

"Nothing more than to obtain what the prisoners can obtain themselves by paying money, a chamber *à la pistole*." "Alas! then he is lost, if they hate him in the prison."

"Don't disturb yourself; he shall be watched closely. But I repeat it, my dear demoiselle, counsel him to be a little familiar with them; only the first step costs!" "I will recommend him to do this with all my strength, monsieur; but for a good and honest heart it is hard, do you see, to be familiar with such people."

"Of two evils choose the least. Alons, I go to ask for M. Germain. But, in fact, stop," said the guardian, reflecting; "there are only two visitors left; as soon as they are gone—no more will come to day, for it is now two o'clock—I will send for M. Germain; you can talk more at ease. I even can, when you are alone, let him enter into the *'couloir*,' so that you will be separated by one grating instead of two; *'c'est toujours cela*.'"

"Ah! monsieur, how kind you are; how much I thank you!" "Hush! let not any one hear you; it will cause jealousy. Seat yourself up there, at the end of the bench, and as soon as this man and woman are gone I will send for M. Germain."

The guardian returned to his post inside of the *'couloir*;" Rigolette went and seated herself sadly at the extremity of the visitors' bench.

While the grisette awaits the arrival of Germain, we will listen to the conversation of the prisoners who remained in the parlor after the departure of Nicolas Martial.

CHAPTER XIX.

PIQUE-VINAIGRE.

THE prisoner who was placed alongside of Barbillon was a man about forty-five years of age, slender make, and with a cunning, intelligent, jovial, and jeering face; he had an enormous mouth, almost entirely without teeth; when he spoke he twisted it from right to left, according to the pretty general custom of those who address the populace of the market-places; his nose was flat, his head immensely large, and almost entirely bald; he wore an old waistcoat of gray stuff, pantaloons of an indescribable colour, pieced in a thousand different places; his naked feet, red from the cold, half wrapped up in old linen, were thrust into "*sautes*" (wooden shoes).

This man, named Fortuné Gobert, nicknamed Pique-Vinaigre, formerly a juggler, and a liberated prisoner for the crime of passing counterfeit money, was accused of "*rupture de ban*," and robbery committed at night, with burglary and "*escalade*."

Confined but for a few days, "*à la force*," already Pique-Vinaigre filled, to the general satisfaction of his prison companions, the post of *conteur* (storyteller). At the present day *conteurs* are rare, but formerly each ward generally had, at the expense of a light individual contribution, its office of *conteur*, who, by his "*improvisations*," made the interminable winter evenings appear less long, the prisoners retiring to rest at nightfall.

* * * * *

Pique-Vinaigre excelled, then, in those kind of heroic recitals where weakness, after a thousand crosses, finishes by triumphing over its persecutors. Pique-Vinaigre possessed, besides, an immense fund of irony, which had given him his nickname. He had just entered the parlor.

Opposite to him, on the other side of the rail, was a woman of about thirty-five, with a pale, sweet, and interesting face, poorly, but neatly clad; she wept bitterly, and kept her handkerchief to her eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre looked at her with a mixture of impatience and affection.

"Come, now, Jeanne," said he, "do not be a child; here, now, is sixteen years since we have met; if you keep your handkerchief over your eyes, it is not the way to know each other."

"My brother, my poor Fortuné—I suffocate—I cannot speak." "An't you droll—go! But what is the matter with you?"

This sister—for this woman was his sister—restrained her sobs, dried her eyes, and regarding him with stupor, answered, "What is the matter? How! I find you again in prison—you, who had already remained fifteen years!" "It is true; to-day it is six months since I came out of the *centrale* of Melun, without going to see you at Paris, because the *capital* was forbidden to me."

"Already retaken! What have you, then, done, mon Dieu! Why did you leave Beaugency, where you were sent under '*surveillance*'?"

"Why? You ought to ask me why I went there?" "You are right."

"In the first place, my poor Jeanne, since these gratings are between us both, imagine that I have embraced you, folded you in my arms, as one ought to do when he sees a sister after an eternity. Now let us chat. A prisoner of Melun, who was called the *Gras-Boiteux*, told me that there was at Beaugency an old galley-slave of his acquaintance, who employed liberated convicts in a manufactory of white lead. Do you know what that is?"

"No, my brother."

"It is a very fine trade; those who are employed in it, at the end of a month or two, have the '*painter's colic*;' of three attacked, about one dies. '*Par exemple*,' to be just, the two others die also, but at their ease; they take their time; take good care of themselves, and last a year, eighteen months, at the most. After all, the trade is not so badly paid as some

others, and there are some folks born already dressed, who hold out for two or three years; but these are the old folks, the centenarians of the *white-leaders*. They die, it is true, but it is not fatiguing."

"And why did you choose a trade so dangerous, my poor Fortuné?"

"And what would you have me do? When I entered Melun for this affair of false money, I was a juggler. As in the prison there was no workshop for my trade, and as I was no stronger than a louse, they put me at making toys for children. It was a manufacturer of Paris who found it advantageous to have made by the prisoners his harlequins, his trumpets of wood, and his swords of *dillo-sabre de bois*! Thus, I tell you, haven't I sharpened, and cut, and carved for fifteen years, these toys! I am sure that I supplied the 'moutards' of an entire 'quartier de Paris'—it was, above all, on the trumpet I excelled; and the rattles, too! With these two instruments one could have put on an edge the teeth of a whole battalion. I pride myself on it. My time out, behold me with the degree of trumpet manufacturer, at two sous each! They allowed me to choose for my residence between three or four places, at forty leagues from Paris: I had for sole resource my knowledge of trumpet-making. Now, in admitting that, from the old men to the babies, all the inhabitants of the town should have had a passion to play *turbutu* on my trumpets: I should have had, even then, trouble enough to pay my expenses; but I could not seduce a whole village into blowing trumpets from morning to night. They would have taken me for an 'intriguant'."

"Mon Dieu! you always laugh."

"That is better than to cry. Finally, seeing that at forty leagues from Paris my trade as a juggler would be of no more resource to me than my trumpets; I demanded a 'surveillance' at Beaugency, wishing to engage myself in the whitelead factory. It is a pastry which gives you an indigestion of *miserere*; but, until one dies from it, one has a living; it is always something gained, and I like that trade as well as that of a robber: to steal I am not brave nor strong enough, and it was by pure chance I have committed the act of which I shall speak directly."

"You would have been brave and strong if you had only had the *idea* not to steal any more."

"Ah! you believe that, do you?"

"Yes, at the bottom, you are not wicked; for, in this dangerous affair of the false money, you have been dragged into it in spite of yourself, almost forced—you knew it well."

"Yes, my girl—but, do you see, fifteen years in a prison, that spoils a man like my old pipe which you see, whenever it comes in the jail white as a new pipe; on coming out of Melun, then, I felt myself too cowardly to steal."

"And you had the courage to follow a deadly calling? Hold, Fortuné! I tell you that you wish to make yourself worse than you are."

"Stop a moment, then: all *gringales* that I was, I had an idea, may the devil burn me if I know why! that I would not care for the colic, that the malady would find too little in me to feed on, and that it would go elsewhere; in fine, that I would become one of the old white-lead-

ers. On leaving the prison I began by squandering my savings, augmented, understand, by what I had gained by relating stories at night in our ward."

"As you used to tell us in old times, my brother? It used to amuse our mother so much, do you remember?"

"Pardieu! good woman! And she never suspected before she died that I was at Melun!"

"Never: to her last moments she thought you had gone to the islands."

"What could I do, my girl! My 'bêtises' were the fault of my father, who brought me up to play the clown, to assist him in his juggling, to eat flax and spit fire; that was the cause that I had not the time to associate with the sons of peers of France, and that I made bad acquaintances. But, to return to Beaugency, once out of Melun, I spent my money as I had a right. After fifteen years in a cage one must have a little air, and amuse ones' self so much the more, as, without being too greedy, the white lead might give me a last indigestion; then, what good would my pension money be to me? I ask you. Finally, I arrived at Beaugency almost without a sous: I asked for *Vetu*, the friend of Gros-Boiteux, the chief of the factory, *Serviteur*! no more manufactory of white lead than you could put under your hand; eleven persons had died there in one year; the old galley-slave had shut up shop. Here I was in this village, with my talents for making wooden trumpets for my dinner, and my convict's passport for my sole recommendation. I asked for employment suited to my strength, and, as I had no strength, you can comprehend how I was received; robber here, gueux there, jail bird! in fine, as soon as I made my appearance anywhere, every one clapped their hands on their pockets; I could not, then, prevent myself from starving with hunger in a hole which I was not to leave for five years. Seeing this, I broke my 'parole' to come to Paris to use my talents. As I had not the means to come in a carriage and four, I came begging all along the road; avoiding the 'gendarmes' as a dog does a kick. I was lucky—I arrived without difficulty at Autueil. I was worried, I was as hungry as the devil; I was dressed, as you see, without pretentiousness." And Pique-Vinaigre cast a merry glance at his rage. "I had not a sou; I could at any moment be arrested as a vagabond. *Mia foi*, an opportunity offered, the devil tempted me, and, in spite of my cowardice—"

"Enough, my brother, enough," said his sister, fearing that the guardian, although at this moment some distance off, might hear the dangerous confession.

"You are afraid that some one will listen," answered he: "be tranquil, I do not conceal it; I was taken in the act; there are no means to deny it; I have confessed all, I know what I have to expect; my account is good."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" answered the poor woman, weeping, "with what sang froid you speak of this!"

"If I were to speak of it with sang froid, what should I gain? Come, be reasonable, Jeanne; must I console you?" Jeanne wiped her tears, and sighed.

"But, to return to my affair," said Pique-Vinaigre: "I arrived near Autueil in the dusk of

the evening. I could go no farther; I did not wish to enter Paris but at night; I seated myself behind a hedge to repose and reflect upon my plans of 'campagne.' From the intensity of my thoughts I fell asleep; a noise of voices awoke me; it was quite dark; I listened, it was a man and woman talking on the road, on the other side of my hedge; the man said to the woman, 'Who do you think would rob us? have we not left the house alone a hundred times?' 'Yes,' answered the woman, 'but then we did not leave a hundred francs in our commode.' 'Who knows it, fool?' said the husband. 'You are right,' replied the woman, and they passed on. Ma foi, the chance appeared too favourable for me to lose—there was no danger.

"I waited until they had got to a little distance to come out from behind my hedge; I looked around: at twenty steps off I saw a small cottage; that must be the house with the hundred francs; there was no other 'bicoque' on the road but this one; Auteuil was five hundred steps off. I said to myself, 'Courage, my old boy, there is no one there; it is night, if there is no dog (you know I always was afraid of dogs), the affair is done.' Luckily there was no dog. To be still more sure, I knocked against the door—nothing; that encouraged me. The shutters of the ground floor were closed: I passed my stick between the two, I forced them, I entered through the window into a chamber; there was some fire in the fireplace; this served as a light; I saw a commode from whence the key had been taken; I took the tongs, I forced the drawers, and under a heap of linen I found the treasure, wrapped up in an old woollen stocking; I did not amuse myself by taking anything else; I jumped out of the window and I fell—guess where! There's luck!"

"Mon Dieu! say, then!"

"On the back of the guard champêtre, who was going to the village."

"What a misfortune!"

"The moon had risen, the guard saw me coming out of the window; he seized me. He was a comrade who could have eaten ten such as me. Too cowardly to resist, I resigned myself to my fate. I still held the stocking in my hand; he heard the money jingle, he took it all, put it in his bag, and compelled me to follow him to Auteuil. He went to the mayor's, with the usual accompaniments of boys and gendarmes; they waited for the proprietors to return, they make their declaration. I could not deny it; I confessed all, signed the 'procès verbal,' they put on the handcuffs, and 'en route.'"

"And here you are in prison again, perhaps, for a long time!"

"Listen, Jeanne, I do not wish to deceive you, my girl, so I will tell you at once."

"What more now, *mon Dieu*!"

"Come, take courage!" "But speak! then!"

"Well! there is no more prison for me."

"How is that?"

"On account of the repetition, burglary, and the 'escalade' in an inhabited house, the lawyer told me, 'It is an account made *comme des petites pailles*.' I shall have fifteen or twenty years at the galleys and a berth in the pillory to boot."

"To the galleys! but you are so weak you will die there!" cried the unhappy woman, bursting into tears.

"And if I had enrolled myself among the *white leaders*?"

"But the galleys, *mon Dieu*! the galleys!"

"It is a prison in the open air, with a red cap instead of a brown one, and, besides, I have always been curious to see the ocean. What a *badaud** of a Parisian I am, *heiu*!"

"But the pillory, *malheureux*! To be exposed there to the contempt of all the world, oh! *mon Dieu*! *mon Dieu*! my poor brother." And the unfortunate woman began again to weep.

"Come, come, Jeanne, be reasonable. It is a bad quarter of an hour to pass, but I believe one is seated. And, besides, am I not accustomed to a crowd? When I played juggler I always had people around me; I will imagine that I am at my old trade, and if it has too much effect upon me I will close my eyes; it will absolutely be the same as if they did not see me."

Speaking with so much stoicism, this unfortunate man wished less to appear insensible of his criminal actions than to console and satisfy his sister by this apparent indifference. For a man accustomed to prison manners, and with whom all shame is necessarily dead—even the galleys were only a change of condition, a change of caps, as Pique-Vinaigre said, with frightful truth.

Many of the prisoners of the central prisons even prefer the galleys on account of the lively, animated life which is led there, committing often attempts at murder to be sent to Brest or Toulon. This can be imagined: before they enter the galleys they have almost as much work, according to their declaration. The condition of the most honest workman of the forts is not less rude than that of the "forçats." They enter the workshop, and leave it, at the same hour, and the beds on which they repose their limbs, exhausted by fatigue, are often no better than those of the galleys.

They are free! some one will say.

Yes, free one day, Sunday, and this is also a day of repose for the "forçat."

But they have not the shame, the contempt!

And what is shame for these poor wretches, who, each day, bronze the soul in this infamy, in this mutual school of perdition, where the most criminal are the most distinguished? Such are the consequences of the present system of punishment. Incarceration is very much sought after.

The galleys—often demanded.

* * * * *

"Twenty years in the galleys, *mon Dieu*! *mon Dieu*!" repeated the poor sister of Pique-Vinaigre.

"But be comforted, Jeanne; they will only pay me in my own coin; I am too feeble to be placed at hard labour. If there is not a manufactory of trumpets and wooden swords, as at Melun, they will give me easy work, and employ me in the infirmary. I am not refractory; I am good-natured; I will tell stories as I do here, I will make myself *adored by my chiefs, esteemed by my comrades*, and I will send you some cocoa nuts nicely carved, and some straw boxes

* *Badaud* is a nickname given to the inhabitants of Paris because they are apt to admire anything that seems wonderful.

for my nephews and nieces; in fine, the cork is drawn, we must drink."

"If you had only written that you were coming to Paris, I would have tried to conceal and lodge you while you were waiting for work."

"Pardieu! I reckoned to go to your house, but I prepared to come with my hands full; for, besides, from your appearance I see that you do not ride in your carriage. Ah ça! and your children and husband?"

"Do not speak to me about him."

"Always a 'bambocheur'; it is a pity, for he is a good workman."

"He does me much harm—va—I have had trouble enough of my own, without having yours added to them."

"How! your husband—"

"Has left me for three years past, after having sold all our furniture, leaving me with the children, without anything, my straw bed excepted."

"You did not tell me this!"

"For what good! it would have grieved you."

"Poor Jeanne! And how have you managed, all alone with your three children?"

"Dame! I had much trouble; I worked by the job as a fringe-maker, as well as I could; my neighbours helped me a little, taking care of my children when I went out; and then I, who do not always have luck, had it for once in my life, but it did not profit me, on account of my husband."

"How is that?"

"The lace-maker had spoken of my troubles to one of his customers, informing him how my husband had left me without anything, after having sold all my furniture, and that in spite of it I worked with all my strength to bring up my children; one day, on returning home, what do I find? my room newly furnished, a good bed, linen, and so on; it was the charity of my lace-maker's customer."

"Good customer! Poor sister! Why the devil did you not write me about your poverty? Instead of spending my earnings, I would have sent you some money!"

"I, free, to ask from you, a prisoner?"

"Exactly; I was fed, warmed, lodged at the expense of the government; what I earned was so much gained: knowing that my brother-in-law was a good workman, and you a good manager, I was easy, and I fiddled away my money with my eyes shut and my mouth open."

"My husband was a good workman, it is true, but he became dissipated; in fine, thanks to this unexpected succour, I took fresh courage; my eldest daughter began to earn something; we were happy, except for the sorrow of knowing that you were at Melun. Work was plenty, my children were properly dressed, they wanted scarcely anything; that made me take heart! at length, I had even saved thirty-five francs, when, suddenly, my husband returned. I had not seen him for a year; finding me comfortably fixed and well clad, he made no bones about it, he took the money, settled himself at home, got drunk every day, and beat me when I complained."

"The scoundrel!"

"This is not all: he had lodged in a cabinet of our apartment a bad woman with whom he lived; I had to submit to that. For the second

time, he began to sell little by little the furniture I had. Foreseeing what would happen, I went to a lawyer who lived in the house, and asked him what I should do to prevent my husband from placing me and my children on straw again."

"It was very plain, you ought to have thrust him out of doors."

"Yes, but I had not the right. The lawyer told me that my husband could dispose of everything as chief of the community, and remain in the house without doing anything; that it was a shame, but that I must submit; that the circumstance of his mistress, who lived under one roof, gave me the right to demand the separation of 'corps et biens,' as it is called; so much the more as I had proofs my husband beat me; that I could plead against him, but that it would cost me at least four or five hundred francs to obtain my divorce. You may judge; it is almost all that I could earn in a year! Where could I borrow such a sum! And, besides, it is not only to borrow—but to return. And five hundred francs—all at once—it is a fortune."

"There is, however, a very simple way to amass five hundred francs," said Pique-Vinagre, with bitterness; "it is to hang up the stomach for a year—to live on air and work just the same. It is astonishing that the lawyer did not give you this advice."

"You are always joking."

"Oh! this time, no!" cried Pique-Vinagre, with indignation; "for it is infamous that the law should be too dear for poor folks. For look at you, good and worthy mother of a family, working with all your might to bring up your children honestly. Your husband is an arrant scoundrel; he beats you, abuses you, robs you, and spends at the tavern the money you earn; you apply to justice, that it may protect you, and keep from the clutches of this rascal, your bread and that of your children. The people of the law tell you: 'Yes, you are right, your husband is a bad fellow, justice shall be done, you; but this justice will cost you five hundred francs.' Five hundred francs! that will support you and your family for a whole year! Now, do you see, Jeanne! all this proves what the proverb says, that there are only two kinds of people; those who are hung and those who deserve to be."

Rigolette, alone and pensive, having no one else to listen to, had not lost a word of this conversation, and sympathized deeply in the misfortunes of this poor woman. She promised herself to mention this to Rodolphe as soon as she should see him, not doubting that he would assist her.

CHAPTER XX.

COMPARISON.

RIGOLETTE, feeling a lively interest in the fate of the sister of Pique-Vinagre, did not take her eyes from her, and was endeavouring to approach a little nearer, when, unfortunately, a new visitor entering, asked for a prisoner, and seated himself on the bench between Jeanne and the grisette. She, at the sight of this man, could not restrain a movement of surprise, almost of fear.

She recognised one of the two bailiffs who had come to arrest Morel, putting in execution the judgment obtained against the jeweller by Jacques Ferrand.

This circumstance, recalling to Rigolette's mind the untiring persecutor of Germain, redoubled her sadness, from which her attention had been slightly withdrawn by the touching and painful communications of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. Retreating as far as she could from her new neighbour, the grisette leaned against the wall, and abandoned herself to her sad thoughts.

"Hold, Jeanne," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, whose jovial face had become suddenly clouded, "I am neither strong nor brave; but if I had been there while your husband was causing you so much misery, very playful things would not have passed between us. But you did not act rightly—you—"

"What could I do? I have been obliged to suffer what I could not prevent! As long as there was anything to be sold, my husband sold it, so that he might go to the tavern with his mistress—everything, even to my little girl's Sunday frock."

"But your daily earnings, why did you give them to him? Why did you not hide them?"

"I did hide them; but he beat me so much that I was obliged to give them up. It was not on account of the blows that I yielded, but because I said to myself, in the end he will wound me so seriously that I shall not be able to work for some time; suppose he breaks my arm; then what will become of me—who will take care of, and feed my children? If I am forced to go to the hospital, they will die of hunger then. Thus you can imagine, my brother, I preferred to give my money to my husband, not on account of the beating, but that I might not be wounded, and remain *able to work*."

"Poor woman, va! They talk of martyrdom—it is you who are a martyr!"

"And yet I have never harmed any one; I only ask to work to take care of my children; but what would you? there are the happy and unhappy, as there are the good and the wicked."

"Yes, and it is astonishing how happy the good are! But have you finally got rid of that scoundrel of a husband?"

"I hope so, for he did not leave me until he had sold my bedstead and the cradle of my two little children. But I think he wished to do something worse."

"What do you mean?"

"I say him, but it was rather this bad woman who urged him; it is on that account I speak of it. 'Enfin,' one day he said to me, 'when in a family there is a pretty girl of fifteen like ours, it is very stupid not to make use of her beauty.'"

"Ah! good! I understand. After having sold the clothes, he wished to sell the body!"

"When he said that, do you see, Fortuné, my blood only made one turn; and, to be just, I made him blush with shame at my reproaches; and as this bad woman wished to meddle in our quarrel by asserting that my husband could do with his daughter as he pleased, I treated her so badly, the wretch, that my husband beat me, and since that time I have not seen them."

"Look here, Jeanne, there are folks condemned to ten years' imprisonment who would not have done like your husband, at least they only despoil strangers."

"At the bottom, he is not wicked, look you;

it is bad company at the taverns which has ruined him."

"Yes, he would not harm a child; but to a grown person it is different."

"What would you have? One must take life as the 'bon Dieu' sends it to you. At least, my husband gone, I had no longer any fear of being lamed by any blow; I took fresh courage. Not having anything to purchase a mattress with, for before all one must eat and pay rent, and my poor daughter Catherine and myself could hardly earn together forty sous a day, my two other children being too young to work—for want of a mattress we slept upon a straw bed, made with straw that we picked up at the door of a packer in our street."

"And I have squandered my earnings."

"How could you know my trouble, since I did not tell you? Well, we doubled our work, Catherine and I. Poor child, if you knew how virtuous, and industrious, and good she is! always with her eyes on mine to know what I wish her to do; never a complaint, and yet—she has already seen so much misery, although only fifteen! Ah, ça! it is a great consolation, do you see, Fortuné, to have such a child," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"It is just your own picture, I see; you should have this consolation at least."

"I assure you, 'va,' that it is more on her account that I complain than on my own; for, do you see, since two months she has not stopped working for a moment; once every week she goes out to wash at the boats near the Pont-au-Change, at three sous the hour, the few clothes my husband left us: all the rest of the time at the stake like a poor dog. True, misfortune came to her too soon; I knew well enough that it must come; but at least there are some who have one or two years of tranquillity. That which has also caused me much sorrow in all this, do you see, Fortuné, is, that I could give you no assistance in anything: yet I will try."

"Ah, ça! do you think I would accept? On the contrary, I ask a sou for each pair of ears that listens to my stories; I will ask two, or they will have to do without the fables of Pique-Vinaigre, and that will help you a little in your housekeeping. But why don't you go into lodgings? Then your husband can't sell anything."

"In lodgings? Why, only reflect, we are four, they would ask us at least twenty sous a day; how much would remain for our living? while our chamber only costs us fifty francs a year."

"Allons—it is true, my girl," said Pique-Vinaigre with bitter irony; "work, break your back to fix up your room a little; as soon as you get something, your husband will rob you again, and some fine day he will sell your daughter as he has sold your clothes."

"Oh! as for that, par exemple, he shall rather kill me—my poor Catherine!"

"He will not kill you, and he will sell your poor Catherine. He is your husband, is he not? He is the *chief of the community*, as your lawyer told you, as long as you are not separated by law; and as you have not five hundred francs to give for that, you must be resigned; your husband has the right to take his daughter from you, and where he pleases. Once he and his mistress have a hankering after this poor little child, they will have her."

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! But if this infamy was possible, would there be no justice?"

"Justice!" said Pique-Vinaigre with a burst of sardonic laughter, "is like meat; it is too dear for the poor to eat. Only, understand me, if it is in question to send them to Melun, to put them in the pillory, or throw them into the galleys, it is another affair; they give them this justice *gratis*. If they cut their throats, it is again *gratis*—always *gratis*. 'Ta-a-ake your tickets!" added Pique-Vinaigre, imitating a mountebank; "it is not ten sous, two sous, one sou, a centime," that it will cost you. No, messieurs, it will cost you the trifle of nothing at all; it suits every one's pockets; you have only to furnish the *head*—the cutting and curling are at the expense of government. Here is justice *gratis*. But the justice which would prevent an honest mother of a family from being beaten and despoiled by a vagabond of a husband, who wishes to, and can make money out of his daughter, this kind of justice costs five hundred francs; and you must give it up, my poor Jeanne."

"Hold, Fortuné," said the unhappy mother, bursting into tears, "you kill me!"

"And does it not kill me to think of your lot, and that of your family, and seeing that I can do nothing? I seem always gay; but do not be deceived; I have two kinds of gayety, Jeanne; my gayety gay, and my gayety sad. I have neither the strength nor courage to be bad, angry, or malicious, as others are; that always passes over with me in words more or less farcical. My cowardice and my weakness of body have prevented me from becoming worse than I am. It needed the chance of this lonely hut, where there was neither a cat, nor, above all, a dog, to have urged me to steal. And then, again, it chanced to be a fine moonlight night; for alone, and in the dark, I am as cowardly as the devil!"

"That is what I have always said, my poor Fortuné, that you are better than you think. Thus I hope the judges will have pity on you."

"Pity on me? a returned criminal? reckon on it! After that, I don't wish it; to be here, there, or elsewhere, all the same to me; and then, you are right, I am not wicked; and those who are, I hate them, after my fashion, by making fun of them; you must think that, from relating stories where, to please my audience, I make it come out that those who torment others from pure cruelty receive, in the end, their pay, I become accustomed to feel as I relate."

"Do these people like stories, my brother? I should not have thought it."

"A moment! If I tell them a story where a fellow who robs, or who kills to rob, is strung up at the end, they will not let me finish; but if it is concerning a woman or child, or, for example, a poor devil like me, who would be thrown to the ground if he was only blown upon, and let him be ill treated by a *bluebeard*, who persecutes him solely for the pleasure of persecuting him, for *honour*, as they say; oh! then they shout with joy when, at the end, the *bluebeard* receives his pay. I have, above all, a history called *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, which created the greatest sensation at the Centrale de Melun, and which I have not yet related here. I have promised it for to-night; but they must subscribe largely to my money-box, and you shall profit by it. Without extra charge, I will write it out for your children. *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, it will amuse them; very religious people would read this history; so be easy."

"In fine, my poor Fortuné, what consoles me a little is, to see that you are not as unhappy as the others, thanks to your character."

"I am very sure if I were like a prisoner of our ward, I should be hateful to myself. Poor fellow! I am much afraid that before the end of the day he will bleed from one side or the other; it grows red-hot for him; there is a bad plot formed against him for to-night."

"Ah! mon Dieu! they wish to do him harm? you will have nothing to do with it, at least, Fortuné?"

"Not such a fool! I might be spattered. As I went backward and forward among them, I heard them muttering. They spoke of a gag, to prevent him from crying out; and then, to hinder any one from seeing the execution, they mean to make a circle around him, pretending to listen to one of them, who should be reading a paper or something else."

"But why do they wish to injure him thus?"

"As he is always alone, and speaks to no one, because he seems disgusted with them, they imagine he is a spy, which is very stupid; for, on the contrary, he would keep company with every one, if he wished to spy. Besides, he has the air of a gentleman, and that eclipses them. It is the *captain* of the ward, called the *squelette ambulante* (walking skeleton), who is at the head of this plot. He is like a real *no-bones* after this poor Germain—their intended victim is so named. Ma foi, let them make their own arrangements—it is their business; I can do nothing. But you see, Jeanne, what good comes from being sad in prison; right away you are suspected. Thus I have never been suspected, not I. Ah ça! my girl—enough talk; go and see if I am at your house; you lose too much time by coming here. I can only talk; with you, it is different; therefore, good-night. Come here from time to time; you know I shall be glad to see you."

"My brother, still a few moments, I beg you."

"No, no; your children are expecting you. Ah ça! you do not tell them, I hope, that their uncle is a boarder here?" "They think you are at the islands, as my mother did formerly. In this way, I hope, I can talk to them of you."

"Very good. Ah ça! go! go quickly!"

"Yes, but listen, my poor brother. I have not much, yet I will not leave you thus. You must be cold—no stockings, and this wretched waistcoat! I will fix something for you, with Catherine's aid. Dame! Fortuné, you know that it is not the will to do something for you that is wanting."

"What? what? clothes? but I have my trunks full. As soon as they arrive, I shall have wherewithal to dress myself like a prince. Come, laugh, then, a little! No? Well! seriously, my girl, I do not refuse, while waiting for *Gingalet* and *Coupe en Deux* to fill my money-box. Then I will return it. Adieu, my good Jeanne; the next time you come, may I love my name of Pique-Vinaigre, if I do not make you laugh. 'Allons,' go away; I have already kept you too long."

"But, my brother, listen then!"

"My good man! eh! my good man!" cried Pique-Vinaigre to the guardian, who was seated at the other end of the "conloir," "I have finished my conversation; I wish to go in; talked enough."

"Ah! Fortuné, it is not kind to send me away thus," said Jeanne.

"On the contrary, it is very right. Come, adieu; keep up your courage, and to-morrow morning say to the children that you have dreamed of their uncle, who is at the islands, and that he begged you to embrace them. Adieu."

"Adieu, Fortuné," said the poor woman, all in tears at seeing her brother enter the prison.

Rigolette, since the bailiff had seated himself at the side of her, had not been able to hear the conversation of Pique-Vinaigre and Jeanne; but she had not taken off her eyes from them, thinking how to find out the address of this poor woman, so as to be able, according to her first idea, to recommend her to Rodolphe. When Jeanne rose from the bench to leave the "parloir," the grisette approached her, saying, timidly, "Madame, just now, without wishing to listen to you, I heard that you were a lace-fringe maker?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," answered Jeanne, a little surprised, but prepossessed in favor of Rigolette by her pleasing manners and charming face.

"I am a dress-maker," answered the grisette. "Now that fringes and lace are in just the fashion, I have sometimes some customers who ask me for trimmings after their own taste; I have thought that perhaps it would be cheaper to apply to the makers; and, besides, I could give you more than your employer does."

"It is true, mademoiselle, by buying the silk on my own account, I should gain something. You are very kind to think of me. I am quite surprised."

"Hold, madame; I will speak to you frankly. I await the person I came to see; having no one to talk with, just now, before this gentleman placed himself between us, without wishing it, I assure you, I have heard you talk to your brother of your sorrows, of your children; I said to myself, poor folks ought to assist each other. The idea struck me that I might be of some use to you, since you are a fringe-maker. If, indeed, what I have proposed suits you, here is my address; give me yours, so that when I shall have a little order to give you I shall know where to find you."

And Rigolette gave one of her cards to the sister of Pique-Vinaigre. She, quite touched at the proceedings of the grisette, said gratefully,

"Your face has not deceived me, mademoiselle; and, besides, do not take it for pride, but you have a resemblance to my eldest daughter, which made me look at you twice on entering. I thank you much; if you employ me, you shall be satisfied with my work; it shall be done conscientiously. I am called Jeanne Duport. I live in the Rue de la Barillerie, No. 1." "No. 1. It is not difficult to remember. Thank you, madame."

"It is for me to thank you, my dear demoiselle; it is so kind in you to have thought at once of serving me! Once more I express my surprise."

"Why it is very plain, Madame Duport," said Rigolette, with a charming smile. "Since I look like your daughter Catherine, that which you call my kindness ought not to surprise you."

"How kind, dear demoiselle! Thanks to you, I go away from here less sad than I thought; and then, perhaps, we may meet here again, for you come, like me, to see a prisoner."

"Yes, madame," answered Rigolette, sighing.

"Then, adieu. I shall see you again; at least I hope so, Mademoiselle Rigolette," said

Jeanne Duport, after having cast her eyes on the address of the grisette.

"Au revoir," Madame Duport."

"At least," thought Rigolette, resuming her seat, "I know now the address of this poor woman; and certainly M. Rodolphe will interest himself for her when he knows how unfortunate she is, for he has always told me, 'If you know any one much to be pitied, address yourself to me.'"

And Rigolette, taking her place, awaited with impatience the end of the conversation of her neighbour, in order to be able to ask for Germain.

* * * * *

Now a few words on the preceding scene.

Unfortunately, it must be confessed, the indignation of the brother of Jeanne Duport was legitimate. Yes; in saying the law was too dear for the poor, he said the truth.

To plead before the civil tribunals is to incur enormous expenses, quite out of the reach of artisans, who barely exist on their scanty wages.

Let a mother or father of a family belonging to this ever-sacrificed class wish to obtain an obliteration of the conjugal tie; let them have all right to obtain it; will they obtain it?

No; for there is no workman in a condition to spend four to five hundred francs for the onerous formalities of such a judgment.

Yet the poor have no other life than a domestic one; the good or bad conduct of the head of an artisan's family is not only a question of morality; it is a question of bread. The fate of a woman of the people, such as we have endeavoured to paint, does it, then, deserve less interest, less protection than that of a rich woman, who suffers from the bad conduct or infidelities of her husband?

Nothing is more worthy of pity, doubtless, than the griefs of the heart. But when to these griefs is added, for an unfortunate mother, the misery of her children, is it not monstrous that the poverty of this woman places her without the law, and leaves her and her family without defence against the odious treatment of a drunken and worthless husband?

Yet this monstrosity exists.

And a liberated convict can, in this circumstance as in others, deny, with right and reason, the impartiality of the institutions in the name of which he is condemned.

Is it necessary to say what there is in this dangerous to society, to justify such attacks?

What shall be the influence, the moral authority of those laws whose application is absolutely subordinate to a question of money?

Civil justice, like criminal justice, ought it not to be accessible to all?

When people are too poor to be able to invoke the benefits of a law eminently preservative and tutelary, ought not society to assure the application, through respect for the honour and repose of families?

But let us leave this woman, who will remain all her life the victim of a brutal and perverted husband, because she is too poor to obtain a matrimonial separation by law.

Let us speak of the brother of Jeanne Duport. This man left a den of corruption to enter the world again; he has paid the penalty of his crime by expiation. What precautions has society taken to prevent his falling back into crime?

None.

Has any one, with charitable foresight, rendered possible his return to well doing, in order to be able to punish, as one should punish, in a becoming manner, if he shows himself incorrigible?

No.

The contagious influence of your jails is so well known, and so justly dreaded, that he who comes out from them is everywhere an object of scorn, aversion, and alarm. Were he twenty times an honest man, he will scarcely find occupation anywhere.

And what is more: your withering "surveillance" banishes him to small localities, where his past life must be well known; and here he will have no means of exercising the exceptional employment often imposed on the prisoners by the contractors of the *maison centrales*. If the liberated convict has the courage to resist temptation, he abandons himself to some of those murderous occupations of which we have spoken, to the preparation of certain chemical productions, by which one in ten perish; or, if he has the strength, he goes to get out stone in the forest of Fontainebleau, an employment which he survives, average time, six years!

The condition of a liberated convict is, then, much worse, more painful, more difficult, than it was before his first criminal action: he lives surrounded by shackles and dangers; he is obliged to brave repulses and disdain—often the deepest misery.

And if he succumbs to all these frightful temptations to criminality, and commits a second crime, you show yourselves ten times more severe towards him than for his first fault.

That is unjust; for it is almost always the necessity you impose on him which conducts him to a second crime. Yes; for it is shown that, instead of correcting him, your penitentiary system depraves. Instead of ameliorating, it makes worse. Instead of curing slight moral affections, it renders them incurable. Your aggravation of punishment, applied without pity to the backslider, is, then, iniquitous, barbarous, since this backsliding is, thus to express it, a forced consequence of your penal institutions.

The terrible punishment which awaits this *twice guilty* would be just and excusable if your prisons improved the morals, purified the prisoners, and if, at the expiration of the sentence, good conduct was, if not easy, at least generally possible.

If any one is surprised at these contradictions of the law, what would he be when he compares certain offences to certain crimes?

Either on account of their inevitable consequences, or on account of the disproportion which exists in their punishment. The conversation of the prisoner whom the bailiff came to see will offer to us one of these afflicting contrasts.

CHAPTER XXI.

MAÎTRE BOULARD.

The prisoner who entered the "parloir" at the moment that Pique-Vinagre left it, was a man of about thirty years of age, with red hair, and a jovial, fat, and ruddy face; his middling stature rendered still more remarkable by

his enormous "camboupin." This prisoner, so rosy and stout, was wrapped up in a long and warm riding coat of gray swan's down, with gaiter-trousers of the same material. A kind of hooded cap of red velvet, called a *la Perimot* *Locrest*, completed the costume of this personage, who were excellent furred slippers. Although the fashion of trinkets was over, the golden watch-chain sustained a goodly number of fine gold seals and rings. Finally, several rings, enriched with precious stones, sparkled on the fat red fingers of this prisoner, named "Maître Boulard, huissier," accused of breach of trust.

His visitor was, as we have said, Pierre Bourdin, one of the officers charged with the arrest of Morel the jeweller. This bailiff was ordinarily employed by Maître Boulard, huissier of M. Petit Jean, an assumed name of Jacques Ferraud.

Bourdin was rather smaller, but quite as fit as the huissier, patterned after his patron, whose magnificence he admired. Having, like him, a partiality for jewels, he wore on this day a superb topaz pin, and a long chain of gold suspended from his neck, was entwined among the buttonholes of his waistcoat.

"Good-day! faithful Bourdin; I was quite sure you would not be missing at the roll call," said Maître Boulard, joyously, in a little cracked voice, which singularly contrasted with his fat body and his blooming face. "Missing at roll call?" answered the bailiff; "I am incapable of such an act, *my general*!" It was thus that Bourdin, with a pleasantry at once familiar and respectful, called the huissier, under whose orders he acted; this military form of speech being often used among certain classes of "employees" and civil practitioners.

"I see, with pleasure, that friendship remains faithful to the unfortunate," said Maître Boulard, with cordial gaiety; "yet I began to be uneasy. Here are now three days since I wrote you, and no Bourdin."

"Imagine, my general, that is quite a history. You recollect well the handsome vicomte of the Rue de Chaillot?" "Saint Remy?"

"Exactly! You know how he laughed at our writs?" "It was quite indecent."

"To be sure it was. We two, Malicorne and I, were quite stupefied at it, if that were possible."

"It is impossible, brave Bourdin."

"Happily, my general; but here is the fact; this handsome vicomte has got new titles."

"Has he become a count?"

"No! from a cheat he has become a robber."

"Ah! ah!"

"They are at his heels for some diamonds he has stolen; and, by way of parenthesis, they belong to the jeweller who employed this vermin of a Morel, the lapidary whom we went to nab in the Rue du Temple, when a tall slim jockey, with black mustaches, paid for this starved rat, and came near picking us headforemost down the stairs, Malicorne and me."

"Ah! yes, yes; I recollect. You told me that, my poor Bourdin; it was very funny. The best of the farce was that the portiere of the house emptied on your backs a saucepan of boiling soup."

"Saucepan included, general, which broke like a bomb at our feet. The old sorceress!"

"That will be taken into your account of services and wounds. But this handsome vicomte?"

"I tell you, then, that Saint Rémy was prosecuted for a robbery, after having made his minny of a father believe that he had blown his brains out. An agent of the police, one of my friends, knowing that I had for a long time tracked this vicomte, asked me if I could not put him on the scent. I had known too late, at the time of our last writ, which he had escaped, that he was burrowed in a farm at Arnouville, at five leagues from Paris. But when we arrived there it was too late; the bird had flown!"

"Besides, he had the following day paid this bill of exchange; thanks to a certain great lady, they say. Yes general; but, no matter; I knew the rest. He had once been concealed there; he might well enough be concealed there a second time. That is what I said to my friend the agent of police. He proposed to me to lend a hand, as an amateur, and conduct him to the farm. I had nothing to do—it was a nice party to the country—I accepted." "Well! she the vicomte?"

"Not to be found. After having at first wandered around the farm, and having afterward introduced ourselves there, we returned as wise as we went; and this is the reason I have not been able to render myself sooner to your orders, my general."

"I was very sure there was an impossibility on your part, my good fellow."

"But, if it is not improper, tell me, how the devil did you get here?"

"Vulgar people, my dear—a herd of 'canailles,' who, for the miserable sum of sixty thousand francs, of which they pretend I have despoiled them, have carried a complaint against me for an abuse of confidence, and forced me to give up my commission."

"Really! general! ah well! this is a misfortune! how—shall we work no more for you?" "I am on half pay, my good Bourdin; here I am on an allowance."

"But who is, then, so savage?"

"Just imagine that one of the most severe against me is a liberated robber, who gave me to collect a bill of seven hundred miserable francs, for which it was necessary to prosecute. I did prosecute; I was paid, and I pocketed the money; and because, in consequence of speculations which did not succeed, I have spent this money, as well as that of many others, all this 'canaille' have made such a bawling, that a writ was issued to arrest me, and thus you see me here, my good fellow; neither more nor less than a malefactor."

"Take care that don't cause you to sweat, my general."

"Mon Dieu! yes; but what is most curious is, this convict has written to me, some days since, that this money being his sole resource for rainy days, and that these days had now arrived (I do not know what he means by that), I was responsible for the crimes he might commit to escape starvation."

"It is charming, on my word!"

"Is it not nothing more convenient. The droll fellow is capable of giving that as an excuse. Happily, the law knows no such excuses."

"After all, you are only accused of an abuse of confidence, is it not, my general?"

"Certainly! do you take me for a thief, Maître Bourdin?" "Ah! 'par exemple,' general. I meant to say there was nothing serious in all this; after all, there is not enough to whip a cat."

"Have I a despairing look, my good fellow?"

"Not at all; I never saw you look more cheerful. Indeed, if you are condemned, you will only have two or three months imprisonment, and twenty-five francs fine. I know my code."

"And these two or three months, I shall be allowed, I am sure, to pass them at my ease in a 'maison de santé.' I have a deputy in my sleeve."

"Oh! then your affair is sure."

"Hold, Bourdin, I can hardly keep from laughing; these fools who have sent me here will gain much by it! They shall never see a sou of the money they claim. They force me to sell my commission—all the same. I am aware of the duty I owe my predecessor. You see it is these Gogues who will be the geese of the farce, as Robert Macaire says."

"That produces the same effect on me, general; so much the worse for them."

"Ah! my good fellow, let us come to the subject which made me beg you to come here; it is touching a delicate mission, concerning a female," said Maître Boulard, with a mysterious air.

"Ah! regus of a general, I recognise you there! What is it? count on me."

"I interest myself particularly for a young 'artiste' of the 'Folies-Dramatiques.' I pay her board, and, in exchange, she pays me in return, at least I think so; for, my good fellow, you know, often the 'abeat' are always in the wrong! Now, I am the more tenacious to know if I am wrong, as Alexandrine—she is called Alexandrine—has sent for some money. I have never been stingy with the fair sex; but, listen, I do not wish to be made a fool of. Thus, before playing the generous with this dear friend, I wish to know if she deserves it by her fidelity. I know there is nothing more *rococo*, more absurd, than fidelity; but it is a weakness I have. You will render me, then, a friendly service, my dear comrade, if you can for a few days have a supervision over my love, and let me know how to act, either by talking with the portiere of Alexandrine, or—"

"Sufficient, my general," answered Bourdin, interrupting the "huissier." "This is nothing worse than watching, spying, and following a creditor. Have confidence in me; I shall find out if Mademoiselle Alexandrine sticks a pen-knife in the contract, which appears to me quite improbable; for, without flattery, my general, you are too handsome a man, and too generous (not to be valued)."

"I ought to be a handsome man; I am absent, my dear comrade, and it is a great wrong; in fine, I count on you to know the truth."

"You shall know it, I will answer for it."

"Ah! my dear comrade, how can I express my gratitude?"

"Come, come, now, my general."

"It is understood, my good Bourdin, that in this affair, your fees shall be the same as for an arrest."

"My general, I will not allow it; so long as I acted under your orders, have you not always allowed me to guide the debtors to the quack, treble the fees of arrest, costs which you have afterward prosecuted to payment with as much activity as if they had been due to yourself?"

"But, my dear comrade, that is different; and in my case I will not allow—"

"My general, you will humiliate me, if you do not allow me to offer you this as a feeble proof of my gratitude."

"Very well; I shall struggle no longer with your generosity. Besides, your devotion will be a sweet recompense for the *maelieux* that I have always maintained in our business affairs."

"That is what I expect, my general; but can I not serve you in any other way? you must be horribly situated here, you, who like to be so much at your ease! You are *à la pistole*, I hope?"

"Certainly, and I arrived just in time, for I have the last vacant room. I have arranged myself as well as I can in my cell; I am not very badly off; I have a stove; I sent for a good arm-chair; I make three long repasts; I digest; I walk and sleep. Saving the inquietudes which Alexandrine causes me, you see I am not much to be pitied."

"But for you who are so *gourmand*, general! the resources of the prison are so meager?"

"And the provision merchant who lives in this street, has he not been created, as it were, for my service? I have an open account with him, and every day he sends me a nice little basket; and while on this subject, and you are ready to do me a favour, beg the '*marchande*,' this good little Madame Michonneau, who, by parenthesis, is not so bad—"

"Ah! rogue—rogue of a general!"

"Come, my dear comrade, no evil thoughts," said the huissier, with a shade of fatuity, "I am only a good customer and neighbour. Pray the dear Madame Michonneau to put into my basket to-morrow a '*paté*' of pickled tunny fish; it is now in season; it will be good for my digestion, and make me drink."

"Excellent idea!"

"And then, let Madame Michonneau send a hamper of Burgundy, Champagne, and Bordeaux, just like the last—she knows what that means; and let her add two bottles of her old Cognac of 1817, and a pound of pure Mocha, fresh ground and burned."

"I will just note down the date of the brandy so as not to forget it," said Bourdin, taking his notebook from his pocket.

"Since you are writing, my dear comrade, have the goodness to note down to ask at my house for my *eider down*."

"All this shall be executed to the letter, my general. Be easy; I feel now a little more assured as to your good living. But your walks, do you take them pell-mell with these brigands of prisoners?"

"Yes, and it is very gay, very animated; I come out of my room after breakfast; I go sometimes into one court, sometimes into another; and, as you say, I mix with the '*canaille*.' I assure you that, at the bottom, they appear to be very good fellows; some of them are very amusing. The most abandoned assemblage in what they call the *Passe aux Lions*. Ah! my dear comrade, what patibulary-looking faces! There is one among them who is named *Le Squellette*; I have never seen his fellow."

"What a singular name?"

"He is so thin, or, rather, so fleshless, that it is no nickname; I tell you, he is frightful; and with all this, he is provost of his ward; he is by far the greatest villain of them all. He comes from the galleys, and he has again robbed and murdered; but his last murder is so horrible, that he knows very well he will be condemned to

death to a certainty, but he laughs at it like *de colon-tampon*" (a kind of Swiss march).

"What a bandit!"

"All the prisoners admire, and tremble before him. I put myself at once in his good graces, by giving him some cigars; thus he has taken me into his friendship, and teaches me *argot* (slang). I make progress."

"Ah! ah! what a good farce! my general learning *argot*!"

"I tell you I amuse myself like a hunchback. These jockeys adore me; some of them even say *thou*. I am not proud, like a little gentleman called Germain, a barefoot, who has not the means to be *à la pistole*, and who pretends to play the disdainful, the grand seigneur with them."

"But he must have been delighted to find a man so much at home as you are to talk with, if he is so highly disgusted with the others?"

"Bah! he did not seem to remark who I was; but had he remarked it, I should have been very guarded to respond to his advances. He is the butt of the prison. They will play him, sooner or later, a bad turn, and I have not, '*pardieu*,' any desire to partake of the aversion of which he is the object."

"You are very right."

"That would spoil my recreation; for my promenade with the prisoners is a real promenade. Only these brigands have not a great opinion of me, *morally*. You comprehend—my accusation of a simple abuse of confidence—it is a sad thing for such a gentleman. Thus they look upon me as no *great things*, as Arnal says." "In effect, alongside of these matadores (bullslayers) of crime, you are—"

"A real paschal lamb, my dear comrade. Ah, ça! since you are so obliging, do not forget my commissions."

"Do not be uneasy, my general."

"1st. Mademoiselle Alexandrine;

"2d. The '*paté*,' and the hamper of wine;

"3d. The old Cognac of 1817, the ground coffee, and the eider down."

"You shall have all. Anything more?"

"Ah! yes, I forgot. Do you know where M. Badinot lives?"

"The broker? yes."

"Will you tell him that I always reckon on his obliging disposition to find me a lawyer who is prepared for my cause—that I shall not regard a cool thousand?" "I will see M. Badinot, be assured, my general; this evening all your commissions shall be executed, and to-morrow you will receive what you have demanded. Adieu, and good courage, my general."

"Au revoir, my comrade."

And the prisoner left the "*parloir*" on one side, the visitor on the other.

* * * * *

Now compare the crime of Pique Vinaigre, a robber, to the offence of Maître Boulard, the huissier.

Compare the point of departure from virtue of the two, and the reasons, the necessities which have pushed them on to crime.

Compare, finally, the punishment that awaits them.

Coming out of prison, inspiring everywhere fear and indifference, the liberated convict could not follow, in the residence appointed him, the trade he knew; he hoped to be able to work at an occupation dangerous for his life, but suitable for his strength; this resource failed him.

Then he breaks his "ban," returns to Paris, contriving to conceal his former life and find some work.

He arrives, exhausted with fatigue, dying with hunger; by chance he discovers that a sum of money is deposited in a neighbouring house; he yields to temptation, he forces a window, opens a desk, steals one hundred francs, and flies. He is arrested, is a prisoner. He will be tried, condemned. As a recidivator, fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and the pillory is what awaits him. He knows it. This formidable punishment he deserves.

Property is sacred. He who, at night, breaks open your doors to take your goods ought to undergo a severe penalty. In vain shall the culpable plead the want of work, poverty, his position so difficult and intolerable, the wants which this position, this condition of a liberated convict imposes on him. So much the worse; there is but one law. Society, for its peace and safety, will and ought to be armed with boundless power, and without pity repress these audacious attacks upon others.

Yes, this wretch, ignorant and stupid, this corrupted and despised recidivator, has merited his fate.

But what shall he then deserve who, intelligent, rich, educated, surrounded by the esteem of all, clothed with an official character, will steal—not to eat, but to satisfy some fanciful caprice, or to try the chance of stock-jobbing? Will steal, not a hundred francs, but a hundred thousand francs—a million? Will steal, not at night, at the peril of his life, but tranquilly, quite at his ease, in the sight of all? Will steal, not from an unknown who has placed his money under the safeguard of a lock, but from a client, who has placed from necessity his money under the safeguard of the public officer, whom the law points out—imposes on his confidence?

What terrible punishment will he deserve, then, who, instead of stealing a small sum almost from necessity, will steal "par luxe" a considerable amount? Would it not be a crying injustice not to apply to him a similar punishment to that bestowed on the recidivator, pushed to extremities by misery, to theft by want?

Get along! says the law.

How! apply to a man well brought up the same punishment as to a vagabond? Fi donc! To compare an offence of good society with a vulgar burglary? Fi donc! (A'n't you ashamed.)

Thus, for the public defaulting officer: Two months' imprisonment.

For the liberated recidivator:—twenty years hard labour, and the pillory.

What can be added to these facts? They speak for themselves.

What sad and serious reflections they give birth to.

Faithful to his promise, the old guardian had called for Germain.

When the huissier Boulard re-entered the prison, the door of the "couloir" opened, Germain entered, and Rigolette was no longer separated from her poor protégé but by a slight wire railing.

CHAPTER XXII.

FRANCOIS GERMAIN.

THE features of Germain were wanting in regularity, but a more interesting face could scarcely be seen; his bearing was exalted; his figure graceful; his dress plain, but neat (gray trousers and a black frock-coat closely buttoned), showed none of that slovenly carelessness so peculiar to prisoners; his white and clean hands bore witness of a care for his person which had still more increased the aversion of the other prisoners; for moral perversity is almost always joined to personal filthiness.

His brown hair, naturally curled, which he wore long and parted on the side, according to the fashion of the times, hung around his pale and dejected face; his eyes, of a beautiful blue, announced frankness and kindness; his smiles, at once sad and sweet, expressed benevolence and habitual melancholy; for, although very young, this unfortunate youth had experienced many trials.

In a word, nothing could be more touching than his appearance, suffering, affecting, resigned; as also nothing more honest, more loyal, than the heart of this young man.

The cause even of his arrest (in despoiling it of the calumnious aggravations due to the hatred of Jacques Ferrand) proved the kind-heartedness of Germain, and accused him only of a moment's thoughtlessness or imprudence, culpable, doubtless, but pardonable, if one reflects that the son of Madame Georges was able to replace in the desk of the notary the sum taken to save Morel the lapidary. Germain blushed slightly when, through the grating of the "parloir," he perceived the fresh and charming face of Rigolette.

She, according to her custom, wished to appear gay, to encourage and cheer the spirits of her protégé; but the poor child badly concealed the sorrow and emotion that she had always felt since he had been imprisoned. Seated on a bench on the other side of the railing, she held on her lap her straw "cabas."

The old guardian, instead of remaining in the "couloir," went and seated himself near a stove at the extremity of the room. In a few moments he fell asleep.

Germain and Rigolette could then talk at their ease.

"Come, Monsieur Germain," said the grisette, approaching her face as close as she could to the grating, the better to examine the features of her friend; "let me see if I am satisfied with your face. Is it less sorrowful? Hum! hum! so, so; take care; you will make me angry." "How kind you are to come again to-day!" "Again! what! that is a reproach." "Ought I not, in truth, reproach you for doing so much for me—for me, who can do nothing but thank you?"

"An error, monsieur; for I am also as happy from my visits as you are. So I must, in my turn, thank you. Ah! ah! there is where I have caught you, Monsieur the Unjust. Thus I have half a mind to punish you for your wicked ideas, by not giving you what I have brought."

"Another kindness! how you spoil me! oh! thank you. Pardon me, if I repeat so often this word, which you dislike! but you leave me nothing else to say."

"In the first place, you do not know what I have brought."

* The reflections of M. Sue on the absurdity of the penal laws of France we now omit; they are more particularly interesting to his own countrymen, and all such have doubtless read the original.

"What is that to me?" "Well, you are positive!"

"Whatever it may be, does it not come from you? Your touching kindness, does it not fill me with gratitude, and—"

Germain could not finish, but cast down his eyes.

"And of what?" asked Rigolette, blushing.

"And of—and of devotion," stammered Germain.

"Why not add respect at once, like at the end of a letter," said Rigolette, impatiently. "You deceive me; it was not that which you intended to say. You stopped short."

"I assure you—"

"You assure me! you assure me! I see you blush through the grating. Am I not your little friend, your neighbour? Why do you conceal anything? Be frank, then, with me; tell me all," added the grisette, timidly; for she only waited for an avowal from Germain to tell him naïvely, honestly, that she loved him. An honest and generous love, which the misfortunes of Germain had called into existence.

"I assure you," answered the prisoner, with a sigh, "that I conceal nothing from you!"

"Fy, the false man!" cried Rigolette, stamping her foot. "Well, you see this large cravat of white wool that I brought for you?" and she took it from her "cabas." "To punish you for your dissimulation, you shall not have it. I knit it for you. I said to myself, it must be so cold, so damp, in those large courts of the prison, that at least he will be protected nicely with this; he is so chilly."

"How, you?"

"Yes, monsieur; you are liable to cold," said Rigolette, interrupting him. "Perhaps I recollect it well! that did not, however, prevent you hindering me (out of delicacy) from putting any more wood in my stove when you passed the evening with me. Oh, I have a good memory."

"And I also—only too good!" said Germain, in an agitated voice, passing his hand over his eyes.

"Come, now, there you are becoming sad again, although I forbid it." "How, do you wish me not to be touched, even to tears, when I think of all that you have done for me since my detention here? And this new attention, is it not charming? Do I not know that you encroach upon your nights to make time to come and see me? On my account you impose upon yourself extra labour." "That is it! Pity me, then, quickly, because every two or three days I take a fine walk to come and visit my friends, I, who adore a walk. It is so amusing to look at the shops along the streets!"

"And to come out on such a day; such a wind!"

"A reason the more; you have no idea what funny figures you meet! Some holding on their hats with both hands, so that the wind shall not carry them off; others, while their umbrellas turn wrong side out, like a tulip, are making incredible grimaces, shutting their eyes, while the rain beats in their faces. Ah, this morning, during my whole walk, it was a real comedy! I promised myself to make you laugh by telling it to you. But you will not even force a smile."

"It is not my fault; pardon me, but the kind interest you have manifested for me touches my very heart. You know it; my emotions are never gay; they are stronger than—"

Rigolette, not wishing to let him observe that,

notwithstanding her prattle, she was very near partaking his agitation, hastened to change the conversation, and replied,

"You say that your feelings are stronger than you; but there is another thing that you will not master, although I have begged and supplicated you," added Rigolette. "Of what do you speak?"

"Of your obstinacy in always keeping yourself apart from the other prisoners; in never speaking to them. The guardian has just told me again that, for your own interest, you should associate with them. I am sure you will not do it. You are silent. You see well it is always the same thing! You will not be contented until these frightful men have done you some harm!"

"You do not know the horror with which they inspire me. You do not know all the personal reasons that I have to fly and execrate them and their fellows!" "Alas! yes; I think I know them—these reasons. I have read the papers which you wrote for me, and which I went to your lodgings to get after your imprisonment. There I have learned the dangers you have incurred since your arrival in Paris, because you would not associate yourself in crime with the scoundrel who brought you up. It was on account of the trap set for you that you left the Rue du Temple, only telling me where you were going to reside. In those papers I have also read something else," added Rigolette, blushing anew, and casting down her eyes; "I have read some things—that—"

"Oh! that you should have been always ignorant of, I swear it," cried Germain, quickly, "but for the misfortune which has fallen upon me—Ah! I interest you; be generous; pardon me these follies; forget them. In happier times I allowed myself these dreams, as wild as they were."

Rigolette had a second time endeavoured to extract an avowal from the lips of Germain, by making allusion to passages filled with tenderness and passion, which he had formerly written and dedicated to the recollections of the grisette; for, as we have said, he had always felt for her a lively and sincere affection; but to enjoy the cardinal intimacy of his sweet neighbour, he had concealed this love under the mask of friendship.

Rendered by misfortune still more suspicious and timid, he could not imagine that Rigolette loved him *with love*; he a prisoner, he withering under a terrible accusation, while before these misfortunes she had never evinced any attachment stronger than that of a sister.

The grisette, seeing herself so little understood, suppressed a sigh, waiting, hoping for a better occasion to unfold to Germain the wishes of her heart. She answered, then, with embarrassment: "Mon Dieu! I can well comprehend that the society of these bad people causes you horror, but that is no reason for you to brave useless dangers."

"I assure you that in order to follow your advice, I have several times tried to address some of them who seemed the least criminal; but if you knew what language! what men!"

"Alas! it is true, it must be terrible."

"What is still more terrible is, to find I become more and more accustomed, habituated to the frightful conversations which, in spite of myself, I hear all the day; yes, now I listen with a sad apathy to the horrors which, during my first

days here, aroused my indignation; thus, I began to doubt myself," cried he, with bitterness.

"Oh! Monsieur Germain, what do you say?"

"By constantly living in these horrible places, our minds become accustomed to criminal thoughts, as our hearing becomes habituated to the gross words which resound continually around us. *Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* I comprehend now that one can enter here innocent, although accused, and leave it perverted."

"Yes, but not you—not you?"

"Yes, I, and others a thousand times better than I. Alas! those who, before conviction, condemn us to this odious association, are ignorant of its mournful and fatal effects. They are ignorant that almost in all cases the air which is breathed here becomes contagious—fatal to honour!"

"I pray you, do not talk thus; you cause me too much sorrow." "You ask me the cause of my growing sadness, there you have it. I did not wish to tell you; but I have only one way of acknowledging your pity for me."

"My pity—my pity?"

"Yes, it is to conceal nothing from you. Ah well! I acknowledge it with affright. I no longer recognise myself. I have good reason to despise, to fly these wretches. Their presence, their contact affects me, in spite of myself. One would say that they have the fatal power to vitiate the atmosphere they breathe. It seems to me that I feel the corruption entering through every pore. If they absolve me from the fault I have committed, the sight, the acquaintance of honest men will fill me with confusion and shame. I have not yet had the enjoyment of pleasant companions; but I dread the day when I shall find myself among honourable people, because I have the consciousness of my weakness."

"Of your weakness?" "Of my cowardice!"

"Of your cowardice? but what unjust ideas you have of yourself! *mon Dieu!*"

"Ah! is it not to be cowardly and culpable to compound with one's duty and probity? And that I have done." "You! you!"

"If on entering here, I did not extenuate the magnitude of my fault, all excusable as it was, perhaps. Well! now it appears to me less, from hearing these robbers and these murderers speak of their crimes with obscene jests or ferocious pride. I surprise myself sometimes envying them their audacious indifference, and upbraiding myself bitterly for the remorse with which I am tormented for so slight an offence, compared to their misdeeds."

"But you are right! your deed, far from being blameable, is generous; you were sure of being able to return the money which you took only for a few hours, in order to save a whole family from ruin, from death, perhaps."

"No matter; in the eyes of the law, in the eyes of honest men, it is a robbery. Doubtless it is less criminal to steal for such a purpose, than for any other; but, '*voyez vous*,' that is a fatal symptom, to be obliged, in order to excuse one's self in one's eyes, to look around for a reason. I am no longer the equal of men without a stain. Behold me already forced to compare myself with the degraded men with whom I live. Thus, in time, I well see, conscience is blunted, becomes hardened. To-morrow, I will commit a robbery, not with the certainty of being able to restore what I took for a laudable object, but I

will steal from captivity, and I will doubtless think myself innocent in comparison with those who murder to rob. And yet, at this present moment, there is as great a distance between me and an assassin, as there is between me and an irreproachable man. Thus, because there are beings a thousand times more degraded than I am, my degradation is to be excused in my eyes! Instead of being able to say as formerly, I am as honest as the most honest men, I will console myself by saying, I am the least degraded of the wretches among whom I am condemned now to live!"

"Not always? Once out of this?"

"No matter; even if acquitted, these people know me; when they leave the prison, if they meet me, they will speak to me as their old jail companion. If any one is ignorant of the accusation which brought me to the assizes, these wretches will threaten to divulge it. Thus you well see, cursed and now indissoluble links unite me to them, while, shut alone in my cell until the day of my trial, unknown by them as they would have been unknown to me, I should not have been assailed by these fears, which may paralyze the best resolutions. And then, alone, in thinking of my fault, it would have been magnified instead of being diminished; the graver it appeared to me, the greater would have been my future expiation. Thus, the more I should have felt the need of my own pardon, the more in my poor sphere I should have tried to do good. For it needs a hundred good actions to atone for a single bad one. But shall I ever dream of expiating that which at this moment scarcely causes me any remorse? Hold! I feel it, I obey an irresistible influence, against which I have struggled for a long time with all my strength. I was educated for crime, I yield to my destiny; after all, isolated, without family, what matters it that my destiny should be accomplished, be it honest or criminal? And yet, my intentions were good and pure. When they wished to make me guilty, I experienced a profound satisfaction in saying to myself, I have never been wanting in honour, and that, perhaps, was more difficult for me than all the rest. And now—oh! it is frightful—frightful," cried the prisoner, sobbing in so heart-rending a manner that Rigoletto, deeply affected, could not restrain her tears.

Let us say, however, that Germain, thanks to his sterling probity, had struggled for a long time victoriously, and that he felt the approaches of the malady more than he experienced its reality.

His fear of seeing his fault become of less gravity in his own eyes, proved that he still felt all its enormity; but the trouble, apprehension, and doubts which cruelly agitated his virtuous and generous mind, were not the less alarming symptoms.

Guided by the rectitude of her understanding, by her woman's sagacity, and by the impulses of her love, Rigoletto divined that which we have just said. Although well convinced that her friend had not yet lost any of his probity, she feared that, notwithstanding the excellence of his nature, Germain might at some future period become indifferent to that which then tormented him so cruelly.

CHAPTER XXIII.

RIGOLETTE.

"Si assuré que soit le bonheur dont on jouit, on serait quelquefois tenté de désirer des *malheurs impossibles*, pour contempler avec reconnaissance et vénération la noble grandeur de certains dévouemens."—WOLFRANG—*L'Esprit-Saint*, liv. ii.

Rigolotte, wiping her eyes, and addressing Germain, who was leaning against the grating, said to him with a touching, serious, almost solemn accent, and in a manner he had never seen her assume, "Listen to me, Germain: I shall express myself perhaps badly; I do not speak so well as you; but what I shall tell you will be as truly sincere. In the first place, you were wrong to complain of being isolated, abandoned."

"Oh! do not think that I ever forget that which your pity for me inspires you to do!"

"Just now, I did not interrupt you when you spoke of *pity*; but since you repeat this word, I must say that it is not pity at all which I feel for you. I am going to explain this as well as I can. When we were neighbours, I loved you as a brother, as a good companion; you rendered me some little services, I rendered you others; you made me partake of your Sunday amusements, I tried to be very lively, very agreeable, in order to thank you: we were quits." "Quits? oh! no—I—"

"Let me speak in my turn. When you were forced to leave the house where we dwelt, your departure caused me more regret than that of my other neighbours." "Can it be true?"

"Yes, because they were men without care, whom certainly I ought to miss less than you; and, besides, they did not yield themselves to be my acquaintances until I had told them a hundred times that they could be nothing else; while you—you have at once imagined what we ought to be to each other. Notwithstanding this, you have passed with me all the time you had to spare; you taught me to write; you gave me good advice, a little serious, because it was good; in fine, you have been the most attentive of my neighbours, and the only one who asked nothing of me for the trouble. This is not all: on leaving the house you gave me a great proof of confidence. To see you confide a secret so important to a little girl like me, dame! that made me proud. Thus, when I was separated from you, my thoughts were oftener of you than of my other neighbours. What I tell you now is true; you know I never tell a falsehood."

"Can it be possible you should have made this distinction between me and the others?"

"Certainly, I have made it, otherwise I should have a bad heart. Yes, I said to myself, 'No one can be better than M. Germain; only he is a little too serious; but never mind, if I had a friend who wished to marry to be very, very happy, certainly I should advise her to marry M. Germain; for he would be the paradise of a nice little housekeeper.'"

"You thought of me for another!" Germain could not prevent himself from saying mournfully.

"It is true; I should have been delighted to see you make a happy marriage, since I loved you as a valued friend. You see I am frank; I tell you everything." "And I thank you from the bottom of my heart; it is a consolation for me to learn that among your friends I was he whom you preferred."

"This was the situation of things when your troubles came. It was then that I received the good and kind letter in which you informed me of what you called your fault; fault! which I think—who am not a scholar—is a good and praiseworthy action; it was then that you asked me to go for those papers which informed me that you had always loved me, without daring to tell me so. These papers, in which I read"—and Rigolotte could not restrain her tears—"that, thinking of my future, which sickness, or the want of work might render so painful, you left me, if you should die a violent death, as you feared—you left me the little which you had acquired by force of industry and economy—"

"Yes; for if I were alive, and you found yourself without work or sick, it is to me, rather than any one else, that you would address yourself—is it not so? I count on it! speak! speak! I am not mistaken, am I?"

"It is very plain; to whom would you have me apply?" "Oh! hold; these are words which do good, which are a balm for many sorrows!"

"I cannot express to you what I felt on reading—what a sad word—this *will*, of which each line contained a 'souvenir' of me, or a thought for my welfare; and yet I was not to know these proofs of your attachment until you were no longer in existence. Dame! what would you? after such generous conduct one is astonished that love should come all at once! yet it is very natural, is it not, Monsieur Germain?"

The young girl said these last words with a naïveté so touching and so frank, fixing her large black eyes on those of Germain, that he did not understand her at first, so far was he from thinking himself beloved by Rigolotte. Yet these words were so pointed, that their echo resounded from the bottom of the prisoner's heart; he blushed, then became pale, and cried, "What do you say? I fear—oh! mon Dieu—I am mistaken—per—I—"

"I say that from the moment in which I felt you were so kind to me, and in which I saw you so unhappy, I have loved you otherwise than as a brother, and that if now one of my friends wished to marry," said Rigolotte, smiling and blushing, "it is no longer you I should recommend to her, Monsieur Germain."

"You love me! you love me!"

"I must then tell you myself, since you ask me."

"Can it be possible?"

"It is not, however, my fault, for having twice put you in the way to make you comprehend it. But no, monsieur does not wish to understand a hint; he forces me to confess these things to him. It is wrong, perhaps; but as there is no one here but you to scold me for my effrontery, I have less fear; and, besides," added Rigolotte, in a more serious tone, and with deep emotion, "just now you appeared to me so much afflicted, so despairing, that I did not mind it; I have had the self-love to believe that this avowal, made frankly and from the bottom of the heart, would prevent you from being so unhappy for the future. I thought, until now I have had no luck in my efforts to amuse or console him; my dainties take away his appetite, my gaiety makes him weep; this time at least—ah! mon Dieu! what is the matter?" cried Rigolotte, on seeing Germain conceal his face in his hands. "There, tell me now if this is not cruel!" cried she; "no matter what I say or what I do, you remain still unhappy; it is to be too wicked and

by far too egotistical also. One would say there was no one but you who suffered."

"Alas! what misery is mine!" cried Germain, with despair. "You love me, when I am no longer worthy of you!"

"No longer worthy of you? There is no good sense in what you say now. It is as if I had said formerly, that I was not worthy of your friendship, because I had been in prison; for, after all, I have also been a prisoner; am I any less an honest girl?" "But you were sent to prison because you were a poor abandoned child, while I—mon Dieu! what a difference!"

"In fine, as to the prison, we have nothing to reproach ourselves for. It is rather I who am presumptuous; for, in my situation, I ought only to think of marrying some workman. I am a foundling; I possess nothing but my little chamber and my good courage; yet I come boldly and propose to you to take me for a wife."

"Alas! formerly this had been the dream, the happiness of my life! but now—I, under the weight of an infamous accusation, I should abuse your admirable generosity—your pity, which carries you away, perhaps! no—no—"

"But, mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried Rigolette, with impatience; "I tell you it is not a pity, it is love. I only think of you! I sleep no more—I eat no more. Your sad and melancholy looks follow me everywhere. Is that a pity? Now, when you speak to me, your voice, your look, go to my heart. There are a thousand things in you which now please me, and which I had not remarked. I love your face, I love your eyes, I love you, I love your mind, I love your good heart; is this still pity? Why, after having loved you as a friend, do I love you as a lover? I do not know! why was I lively and gay when I loved you as a friend? Why am I all changed since I love you as a lover? I do not know. Why have I waited so long to find you both handsome and good! to love you at once with my eyes and my heart? I do not know; or rather, yes, I do know: it is because I have discovered how much you loved me without ever telling it; how much you were generous and devoted. Then love mounted from my heart to my eyes, like as a soft tear mounts there when one is affected."

"Really, I think I am in a dream on hearing you talk thus." "And I, then! I never should have thought it possible that I could dare to tell you all this; but your despair compelled me! Ah, well! monsieur, now that you know that I love you as my friend, as my lover, as my husband, will you still say it is a pity?"

The generous scruples of Germain were dispelled in a moment before this avowal, so artless and courageous. A joy unlooked for tore him from his sorrowful meditations.

"You love me!" cried he. "I believe you; your voice, your look, all tells me! I do not wish to ask myself how I have deserved such happiness, I abandon myself to it blindly. My life, my whole life, will not suffice to pay my debt to you! Ah! I have already suffered much, but this moment compensates all!"

"At length you are consoled. Oh! I was very sure, very sure I should succeed!" cried Rigolette, with a burst of charming joy.

"And is it in the midst of the horrors of a prison, and is it when everything oppresses me, that such a felicity—" Germain could not finish. This thought recalling the reality of his position, his scruples for a moment forgotten, re-

turned more cruel than ever, and he resumed with despair: "But I am a prisoner; I am accused of robbery; I shall be condemned perhaps; and I would accept your valorous sacrifice! I would profit by your generous exaltation! Oh, no! no! I am not infamous enough for this!"

"What do you say?"

"I may be condemned to years of imprisonment."

"Well!" answered Rigolette, with calmness and firmness, "they will see that I am a virtuous girl; they will not refuse to marry us in the chapel of the prison." "But I may be confined far from Paris."

"Once your wife, I will follow you; I will establish myself in the place where you may be; I will work there, and I will come to see you every day!"

"But I shall be disgraced in the eyes of all."

"You love me more than all; is it not so?"

"Can you ask me?"

"Then what matters it to you? Far from being disgraced in my eyes, I shall regard you as the martyr of your good heart."

"But the world will condemn, calumniate your choice."

"The world! we will be the world to each other; and then let them talk."

"Finally, on coming out of the prison, my living will be precarious, miserable. Repulsed on all sides, perhaps I shall find no employment; and then, it is horrible to think of; but if this corruption which I dread should, in spite of myself, gain on me, what a future for you?"

"You will not be corrupted; no, for now you know I love you, and this thought will give you strength to resist bad examples. You will think that even if every one should repulse you on your leaving the prison, your wife will receive you with love and gratitude, very certain that you are still an honest man. This language astonishes you, does it not?" "It astonishes me." "I do not know where I find what I say to you. It is from the bottom of my heart, assuredly, and that ought to convince you; otherwise, if you disdain an offer which is made from the heart, if you do not wish the attachment of a poor girl who—"

Germain interrupted Rigolette with warmth.

"Well! I accept—I accept; yes, I feel that it is sometimes cowardly to refuse certain sacrifices; it is to acknowledge that one is unworthy of them. I accept, noble and courageous girl."

"True? very true? this time?"

"I swear it to you; and, besides, you have spoken words which have struck me—which have given me the courage I wanted." "What happiness! and what have I said?" "That for you I ought to remain an honest man. Yes, in this thought I will find the strength to resist the detestable influences which surround me. I will brave the contagion, and I will know how to preserve worthy of your love this heart, which belongs to you!"

"Ah! Germain, how happy I am! if I have done anything for you, how you recompense me!"

"And then, do you see, although you excuse my fault, I will not forget its gravity. My task, for the future, shall be doubled—to atone for the past, and deserve the happiness I owe to you. For that I will do good; for, however poor one may be, the occasion is never wanting."

"Alas! mon Dieu! it is true; those who are

more unfortunate than one's self can always be found."

"In default of money—"

"One gives tears, that which I did for the poor Morels. And it is holy alms: *the charity of the heart is worth more than that which gives bread.*"

"In fine, you accept; you will not retract?"

"Oh! never, never, my friend, my wife; yes, my courage returns; I seem to emerge from a dream; I doubt myself no longer; I wronged myself—happily, I wronged myself. My heart would not beat as it does beat if it had lost its noble energy."

"Oh! Germain, how handsome you look while thus speaking! How you reanimate me, not for myself, but for you! Now, you promise, do you not, that, now you have my love to shield you, you will no longer fear to speak to these wicked men in order not to excite their anger against you?"

"Be comforted. On seeing me sad and dejected, they, doubtless, accused me of being a prey to my remorse; and in seeing me joyous and gay, they will think that I have acquired their recklessness."

"It is true; they will suspect you no more, and I shall be happy. So, no imprudence; now you belong to me. I am your little wife?"

At this moment the guardian stirred; he awoke.

"Quick!" whispered Rigolette, with a smile full of grace and maiden tenderness; "quick, my husband, give me a sweet kiss on my forehead, through the grating; it will be our betrothment."

And the young girl leaned her face against the iron bars. Germain, profoundly affected, touched with his lips, through the grating, the pure and white forehead.

A tear from the prisoner fell there like a humid pearl.

Oh! touching baptism of this chaste, melancholy, and charming love!

"Ho! ho! already three o'clock!" said the guardian, rising from his seat; "and visitors ought to leave at two. Come, my dear demoiselle," added he, addressing the grisette, "it is a pity, but you must part."

"Oh! thank you, thank you, monsieur, for allowing us to talk alone. I have given Germain good courage; he will no longer look so sorrowful, and thus he will have nothing more to fear from his wicked companions. Is it not so, my friend?"

"Be tranquil," said Germain, smiling; "I shall be for the future the gayest in the prison."

"Very good; then they will pay no more attention to you," said the guardian.

"Here is a cravat which I have brought for Germain, monsieur," cried Rigolette; "must I leave it at the office?" "It is the rule; but, after all, while I have already transgressed orders, a little thing more or less—come, make the day complete; give him quickly the present yourself." And the guardian opened the door of the "couloir."

"This good man is right; the happiness of the day will be complete," said François Germain, on receiving the cravat from the hands of Rigolette, which he tenderly pressed. "Adieu, and 'à bientôt.' Now I have no longer any fear to ask you to come and see me as soon as possible."

"Nor I to promise it. Adieu, good Germain."

"Farewell, my dear little friend."

"And be sure to make use of my cravat; take care you do not catch cold; it is so damp!"

"What a handsome cravat! When I think that you made it for me! oh! I will always keep it," said Germain, carrying it to his lips.

"Ah, ça! now you will have some appetite, I hope. Do you wish that I should make my little dish for you?" "Certainly, and this time I will do it honour."

"Do not be uneasy, then, Monsieur Glutton; you shall give me your opinion. Come, once more, adieu. Thank you, monsieur the guardian; to-day I go away very happy and gratified. Adieu, Germain."

"Adieu, my little wife; 'à bientôt.'"

"A toujours!"

Some moments after, Rigolette having put on her "sacques,"* left the prison with a lighter heart than when she entered it.

During the conversation of Germain and the grisette, other scenes were passing in one of the courts of the prison, where we shall now conduct the reader.

CHAPTER XXIV.

LA FOSSE AUX LIONS.

If the material aspect of a vast house of detention, constructed with every reference to comfort and salubrity claimed by humanity, presents, as we have said, nothing gloomy or sinister, the sight of the prisoners causes a contrary impression.

A person is commonly touched with sadness and pity when he finds himself in the midst of a crowd of female prisoners, in thinking that these unfortunates are most always forced to crime less from their own will than by the pernicious influence of the first who betrayed them.

And then, again, women the most criminal preserve, at the bottom of the heart, two holy ties which the violent action of passions the most detestable, the most impetuous, never break entirely—*Love and Maternity!* To speak of love and maternity, is to say that, with these poor creatures, a soft and pure emotion can still light up here and there the profound gloom of a wretched corruption.

But with men such as the prison makes them, and casts into the world, there is nothing similar. It is crime of one cast: it is a lump of brass which only becomes red in the fire of infernal passions.

Thus, at the sight of the criminals who encumber the prisons, one is at first seized with a shudder of alarm and horror.

Reflection alone leads you to thoughts more compassionate, but of great bitterness.

Yes, of great bitterness; for one reflects that the vicious population of jails and galleys, the bloody harvest of the executioner, springs up from that mire of ignorance, of misery, and of stupidity. To comprehend this alarming and horrible proposition, let the reader follow us into the Fosse aux Lions.

One of the courts of "La Force" is thus called.

There are ordinarily placed the prisoners most dangerous for their previous ferocity, or for the gravity of the accusations which rest upon them.

Nevertheless, it had been found necessary to add to their number temporarily, in consequence

* A kind of sandals very much used by French women.

of the repairs now going on in the prison, several other prisoners.

These, although equally under the jurisdiction of the Court of Assizes, were almost honest people compared to the habitual inmates of the Fosse aux Lions.

The gloomy, dark, and rainy sky cast a mournful light on the scene we are going to describe. It took place in the middle of the court, which was a vast quadrangle, formed by high white walls, pierced here and there by some grated windows.

At one of the ends of this court was seen a narrow wicket door; at the other, the entrance to the "chauffoir," a large paved hall, in the middle of which was a "calonferre" of cast iron, surrounded by wooden seats, on which were stretched several prisoners, talking among themselves.

Others, preferring exercise to repose, were walking in the courts, in close ranks, four and five together, with locked arms.

One should possess the energetic and sombre pencil of Salvator or of Goya to sketch these diverse specimens of physical and moral ugliness; to describe their hideous habiliments, the variety of costume of these wretches, covered, for the most part, with miserable clothing; for, only being *attainted*, that is to say, *supposed innocents*, they were not dressed in the uniform of the *maison centrale*; some of them, however, wore it; for, on their entrance into prison, their rage had appeared so dirty, so infectious, that, after the customary bath, they had given to them the cap and coarse gray trowsers of the condemned.

A physiognomist would have attentively studied these ghastly and bronzed faces, with their flat foreheads, their cruel and insidious glances, wicked mouths, and brawny necks; almost all offered a frightful resemblance to the brute.

On the cunning features of this, one would find the subtle perfidy of the fox; on another, the sanguinary rapacity of the bird of prey; on the third, the ferocity of the tiger; and on another, again, the animal stupidity of the brute.

The circular walk of this band of silent beings, with bold and contemptuous looks, an insolent and cynical laugh, pressing one against the other, at the bottom of this court, offered something strangely suspicious. It caused a shudder to think that this ferocious horde would be, in a given time, again let loose among mankind, against whom they had declared an implacable warfare. How much sanguinary revenge, how many murderous projects lurk under this appearance of brazen and jeering perversity!

Let us sketch some few of the prominent physiognomies of the Fosse aux Lions; let us leave the others in the back ground. While one of the guardians watched those who were walking, a kind of meeting was held in the "chauffoir."

Among those who were present, we will find Barbilou and Nicholas Martial, of whom we shall speak only "pour mémoire."

He who appeared (as it is called) to *preside*, and conduct the discussion, was a prisoner nicknamed the Squelette (skeleton), whose name was mentioned several times by the Martials at the island of the Ravageurs.

Le Squelette was provost or captain of the "chauffoir." This man, of a good height, and about forty years of age, justified his appropriate nickname by a leanness impossible to be described, and that we should call almost osteological.

If the physiognomies of the companions of

Le Squelette offered more or less analogy to that of the tiger, the vulture, or the fox, the form of his retreating forehead, and his bony, lank, and protruding jaws, supported by a neck of immense length, resembled entirely the conformation of a serpent's head. An absolute *calvitie* increased this resemblance still more; for, under the rough skin of his reptile-shaped forehead could be distinguished the slightest protuberances, the smallest sutures of his skull; as to his visage, let one imagine some old parchment drawn over the face, and only slightly tightened from the cheek-bone to the angle of the lower jaw, the ligament of which was plainly visible.

The eyes, small and squinting, were so deeply sunken, the eyebrows and cheek-bones so prominent, that under the yellowish forehead could be seen two sockets, literally filled with darkness, and, at a small distance, the eyes seemed to disappear in the bottom of these cavities, of these two black holes, which give such a horrible appearance to a death's head. His long, projecting teeth, were almost constantly displayed by an habitual smirk.

Although the emaciated muscles of this man were almost reduced to the condition of tendons, he was of extraordinary strength. The most robust resisted with difficulty the grasp of his long arms, and long, bony fingers. It could be called the grasp of an iron skeleton. He wore a blue "bourgeron," much too short, which disclosed, and he was proud of them, his sinewy hands and the lower part of his arms, or rather bones (the *radius* and the *cubitus*, the reader will pardon this anatomy)—two bones wrapped in a rough and blackened skin, and separated by some hard and cord-like veins.

When he placed his hands on a table, he seemed, to use a just metaphor of Pique-Vinaigre, to display a game of cockal.

Le Squelette, after having passed fifteen years of his life at the galleries for robbery and attempt at murder, had broke his "bar," and had been taken in the act of murder and robbery.

This last assassination had been committed under circumstances of such ferocity, that, taking into account he was a robber, this bandit looked upon himself, and with good reason, as already condemned to death.

The influence which Le Squelette exercised over the other prisoners by his strength, by his perversity, had caused him to be chosen by the director of the prison, provost of the dormitory; that is to say, Le Squelette was charged with the police of his ward, as far as regarded the order, arrangements, and neatness of the room and beds. He acquitted himself perfectly of these functions; and never had the prisoners dared to fail in the duties of which he had the superintendence.

Strange and significant.

The most intelligent directors of prisons, after having tried to invest with the functions of which we speak the prisoners who most recommended themselves by their good conduct, or whose crimes were less grave, had found themselves obliged to deviate in their choice, however logical and moral, and seek for provosts among prisoners the most corrupted, the most feared; these alone could exercise any influence over their companions.

Thus, let us repeat it again, the more a culprit shows audacity and impudence, the more he will be regarded, and, thus to speak, respected.

This fact, proved by experience, sanctioned

by the forced choice of which we have spoken, is it not an irrefragable argument against the evil of an imprisonment in common?

Does it not show, even to an absolute evidence, the intensity of the contagion which mortally attacks prisoners in whom there is some hope of restoration?

Yes, for what use of thinking of repentance, amendment, when in this pandemonium, where one must pass many years—his life, perhaps—it is seen that influence is measured by the number and gravity of misdeeds?

Let us return to Squelette, prevost of the chamber, who was talking with several prisoners, among whom were Barbillion and Nicolas Martial.

"Are you very sure of what you say?" asked Le Squelette of Martial.

"Yes, yes, a hundred times, yes; the Père Micou had it from Gros-Boiteux, who already has wanted to kill him, the 'gredin,' because he has 'mangé' (betrayed) some one."

"Then let some one eat his nose, and put a stop to this!" added Barbillion. "Just now, Le Squelette was for giving a *tourne rouge* (a stab) to this spy of a Germain."

The prevost took his pipe for a moment from his mouth, and said, in a voice so low, so *crapulously* hoarse, that he could scarcely be heard, "Germain holds up his head; he is a spy; he troubles us; for the less one talks the more one listens. We must make him clear out of the *Fosse aux Lions*. Once we make him bleed, they will take him from here."

"Well, then," said Nicolas, "what change is that?"

"There is this change," replied Le Squelette, "that if he has *mangé*, as Gros-Boiteux says, he shall not escape with a small bleeding."

"Very good," said Barbillion.

"There must be an example," said Le Squelette, becoming more animated. "Now it is no longer *la rousse* (police) who finds us out: it is *les mangeurs* (instigators and informers). Jacques and Gauthier, who were guillotined the other day, *mangés*. Roussillon, who was sent to the galleys *à perte de vue* (for life), *mangé*."

"And me, and my mother, and Calebasse, and my brother at Toulon!" cried Nicolas, "have we not been *mangés* by Bras-Rouge? That is certain now, since, instead of putting him here, they have sent him to 'La Roquette'! They did not dare to leave him with us; he knew his treachery, the *gueux*."

"And I," said Barbillion; "has not Bras-Rouge also *mangé* me?"

"And I," said a young prisoner, in a shrill and reedy voice, lisping in an affected manner. "I have been *coqué* (betrayed) by Jobert, a man who proposed an affair in the Rue Saint Martin."

This last personage, with the reedy voice, a pale, fat, and effeminate face, and an insidious and cowardly expression, was dressed in a singular manner. He had on his head a red foulard, which allowed two locks of white hair to be seen plastered on his temples; the two ends of the handkerchief formed a rosette over his forehead; he wore, for a cravat, a shawl of white merino with green palms in the corners on his bosom; his jacket, of maroon-coloured cloth, disappeared under the tight waistband of his ample trousers, made of gay Scotch plaid.

"If this is not an indignity! Must man be a

scoundrel?" resumed this gentleman with the pretty voice. "Nothing in the world would have made me suspect Jobert."

"I know that he informed against you," answered the skeleton, who seemed to patronise this prisoner particularly. "The proof is, that they have done with him as they did with Bras-Rouge: they did not dare to leave Jobert here; they locked him up at the Conciergerie. Well, this must be put a stop to: we must have an example. Our traitor brothers carve out work for the police. They think they are sure of their necks because they are put in a different prison from those they have betrayed."

"It is the truth."

"To prevent this, every prisoner must look upon all *mangeurs* as deadly enemies: if they have blown on Peter or on James, it matters not which, pounce on them. When we have done the job for four or five in the court, the others will wag their tongues twice before they *coquer la pègre* (denounce robbers)."

"You are right, Squelette," said Nicolas; "then Germain must die!"

"He shall die," answered the prevost; "but let us wait until the Gros-Boiteux comes. When he shall have proved to everybody that Germain is a *mangeur*, enough said: the sheep will bleat no more; his breath shall be stopped."

"And what shall we do with the guardians who watch us?" asked the prisoner whom the skeleton called Javotte.

"I have my own idea. Pique-Vinaigre shall serve us."

"He? He is too cowardly."

"And not stronger than a louse."

"Enough. I understand myself. Where is he?"

"He returned from the grate, but some one came for him to go and *jaspiner* (talk) with his *rat de prison* (lawyer)."

"And Germain. Is he still at the grate?"

"Yes; with the little girl who comes to see him."

"As soon as he descends, attention! But we must wait for Pique-Vinaigre: we can do nothing without him."

"Without Pique-Vinaigre?"

"No."

"And Germain shall be—"

"I will take charge of it."

"But with what? They have taken away our knives."

"And these tongs, will you put your neck between them?" asked Le Squelette, opening his long fingers, hard as iron.

"You will choke him?"

"A little."

"But if they know it is you?"

"Afterward? Am I a calf with two heads, such as is shown in the fair?"

"That is true. One can only be made a head shorter once; and since you are sure of being—"

"Doubly sure; the *rat de prison* told me so yesterday. I have been taken with my hand in the pocket, and my knife in the throat of the *pauvre* (victim). I am a *cheval de retour* (second comer); it is all over with me. I will send my head to see, in the basket of *Charlot* (the executioner), if it is true that he cheats the condemned; and that he puts sawdust in his pannier instead of bran, which the government allows us."

"It is true; the guillotined has a right to his bran. My father was cheated, also, I recollect," said Nicolas Martial, with a ferocious chuckle.

"This abominable pleasantry made all the prisoners laugh loudly.

"A thousand thunders!" cried Le Squelette. "I wish they could hear us talk, these *curieux* (judges), who think to make us quake before the guillotine. They have only to come to the Barrière Saint Jacques the day of my benefit; they will hear me crack jokes with the crowd, and say to *Charlot*, in a bold voice, '*Père Samson*, the cord, if you please!'"

Renewed laughter followed this sally.

"The fact is, that the affair lasts as long it takes to swallow a mouthful. *Charlot*, draw the cord; and he opens the door of the *boulangier* (devil) for you!" said Le Squelette, continuing to smoke his pipe.

"Ah, bah! Is there a *boulangier*?"

"Fool! I said that for a joke. There is a knife; a head is placed under, and that is all." "Besides, is that our business?" "As for me, now that I know my road, and that I must stop at the Abbaye de Mort à Regnet (the guillotine), I would as soon go to-day as to-morrow," said Le Squelette, with savage energy. "I wish I was there now. I feel my blood in my mouth when I think of the crowd who will be there to see me. There will be four or five thousand who will fight and quarrel for places. They will hire out windows and chairs as for a procession. I hear them already cry, 'Place to let! place to let!' And then there will be the troops, cavalry, and infantry. And all this for me—for Le Squelette. It is not for a *pauvre* (an honest man) that they take all this trouble. He! friends! Here is something to make a man proud. Even if he should be as cowardly as Pique-Vinagre, it would make him resolute. All these eyes which are looking at you give you courage; and it is but a moment to pass; you die boldly; that vexes the judges and the *pantes*, and encourages the *pegre* (robber) to *blaguer la camarade*" (carry it off boldly).

"That is true," replied Barbillon, endeavouring to imitate the frightful boasting of Squelette. "They think to make us afraid, and confess all, when they send *Charlot* to open his shop on our account."

"Ah, bah!" said Nicolas, in his turn. "One is not wrong to laugh at the shop of *Charlot*; it is like the prison and the galleys; we laugh at them, also; as long as we are all friends together, '*Vive la joie à mort!*' Let us be merry till we die!"

"For example," said the prisoner with the lisping voice; "what would be tough, would be to keep us in cells day and night."

"In cells!" cried Le Squelette, with a kind of savage alarm. "Do not speak of it. In cells! All alone! I would rather they would cut off my arms and legs. All alone! Between four walls! All alone! No old cronies to laugh with! That cannot be! I prefer a hundred times the galleys to the central prisons, because at the galleys, instead of being shut up, one is out of doors, sees company, moves about. Well! I would rather a hundred times be a head shorter than be put into a cell only for one year. Yes, thus, at this moment, I am sure of being

cut down, am I not? Well, let them say to me, 'Would you prefer a year in a cell?' I would stretch out my neck. A year all alone! can this be possible? What would they have one to think of when one is all alone?"

"If they were to put you there by force?"

"I would not remain. I would make such use of my feet and hands that I would escape," said Le Squelette.

"But if you could not; if you were sure that you could not escape?" "Then I would kill the first one I could, in order to be guillotined."

"But if, instead of condemning the *escarpes* (assassins) to death, they condemned them to a solitary cell for life?"

Le Squelette seemed to be staggered by this reflection. After a moment's pause, he replied,

"Then I do not know what I should do. I would break my head against the walls. I would allow myself to die with hunger, rather than be in a cell. How? all alone—all my life alone with myself? without the hope of escape? I tell you it is not possible. You know there is no one bolder than I am. I would bleed a man for a crown, and even for nothing, for honour. They think that I have only assassinated two persons; but if the dead could speak, there are five who could tell how I work." The brigand boasted of his crimes.

These sanguinary egotisms are among the most characteristic traits of hardened criminals. A director of the prison told us, if the pretended murders of which these wretches boast were real, population would be decimated.

"So I say," replied Barbillon, boasting in his turn: "they think that I have only killed the husband of the milkwoman in *La Cité*; but I have served many others, with big Robert, who was shortened last year."

"It was only to tell you," said Le Squelette, "that I fear neither fire nor devil. Well! if I were in a cell, and very sure of not being able to escape—thunder! I believe I should be afraid."

"Of what?" asked Nicolas.

"To be all alone," answered the provost. "Then, if you had to recommence your robberies and murders, and, instead of prisons, galleys, and guillotine, there were only cells, you would hesitate?"

"*Ma foi!* yes—perhaps" (a fact), answered Le Squelette.

And he spoke the truth.

A noisy burst of laughter, and exclamations of joy proceeding from the prisoners who were walking in the court, interrupted the meeting presided over by Le Squelette.

Nicolas rose precipitately, and advanced towards the door of the "*chauffoir*," to ascertain the cause of this unaccustomed noise.

"It is the Gros-Boiteux!" cried Nicolas, returning. "The Gros-Boiteux?" said the provost; "and Germain, has he descended from the talking-room?"

"Not yet," said Barbillon.

"Let him hurry then," said Le Squelette, "that I may give him an order for a new coffin."

CHAPTER XXV.

CONSPIRACY.

LE GROS-BOITEUX, whose arrival had been hailed by the prisoners in the *Fosse aux Lions* with such noisy joy, and whose denunciation was to be so fatal to Germain, was a man of

* To comprehend this humble pleasantry, it must be known that the knife slides in the grooves of the guillotine, after it has been set in motion, by a cord fastened to a spring; and that the only way of getting out of the hotels in Paris is, to ask the porter to draw the cord which leads from his lodge to the door.

middle stature; notwithstanding his obesity and his infirmity, he seemed active and vigorous. His bestial physiognomy, as was the case with most of his companions, much resembled a bulldog's; his low forehead, his little yellow eyes, his falling cheeks, his heavy jawbones, of which the lower, projecting beyond the other, was armed with long teeth, or, rather, broken tusks, which protruded over the lips, rendered this animal resemblance still more striking; he had on his head an otter-skin cap, and wore over his coat a blue cloak with a fur collar.

The *Gros-Boiteux* entered the prison accompanied by a man of about thirty years of age, whose brown and sun-burned face seemed less degraded than those of the other prisoners, although he affected to appear as resolute as his companion; sometimes his face became clouded, and he smiled bitterly.

Le *Gros-Boiteux* found himself, to use a vulgar expression, in the land of his acquaintances. He could hardly reply to the felicitations and welcomes which were addressed to him from all sides.

"Here you are at last, my jovial fellow. So much the better; we shall have a laugh." "We wanted you."

"You have staid away a long time."

"Yet I have done all I could to return to my friends. It is not my fault if they would not have me sooner."

"Just so, my old cock; no one will come of his own accord to be caged; but once there, one must enjoy himself."

"You are in luck, for Pique-Vinaigre is here."

"He also? an old chum of Melun! famous, famous! he will help us pass the time with his stories, and customers will not be wanting, for I announce some recruits." "Who then?"

"Just now, at the office, while they were enrolling me, they brought in two young men. One I do not know; but the other, who wore a blue cotton cap and a gray blouse, stuck in my eye. I have seen this fellow somewhere. I think it was at the *Lapin Blanc*: a very fine-looking man."

"Say now, Gros-Boiteux, do you recollect at Melun, that I bet with you, before a year, you would be nabbed?"

"That is true; you have won; but I had more chances to be a second comer than to be crowned with roses; but you—what have you done?"

"I have robbed à l'Américaine."

"Ah! good, always the same fashion?"

"Always; I go my own nice little road. This trick is common; but greenhorns are also common; and if it had not been for the ignorance of my colleague, I should not be here." "Never mind, the lesson will be of service."

"When I begin again, I will take my precautions; I have my plan."

"Ah, here is Cardillac," said the *Boiteux*, seeing a man approach, miserably dressed, with a low, cunning, and wicked expression, which partook of the fox and the wolf. "Good-day, old man." "Come, come, *trainard*," answered Cardillac, gayly; "they said every day, he will come, he will not come. Monsieur does like the pretty women one must wish for."

"Yes, yes." "Ah ça!" continued Cardillac; "is it for something a little *corsé* that you are here?" "Ma foi, my dear, I went in for a burglary. Before, I had done some good business; but the last failed, a superb affair; which, how-

ever, still remains to be done. Unfortunately, we too, Frank, whom you see, we have *marqué dessus*" (failed).

And the *Gros-Boiteux* pointed to his companion, on whom all eyes were turned.

"So it is, it is true, here is Frank!" said Cardillac. "I would not have known him on account of his beard. How! is it you? I thought that at this present moment you were at least the mayor of your district. You wished to play honest?" "I was a fool, and I have been punished," said Frank, roughly; "but pardon for all sinners; it was good for once; now I belong to the *piège* until I die; look out when I am released!"

"Very good; that is the way to talk."

"But what has happened to you, Frank?"

"That which happens to all liberated prisoners who are fools enough, as you say, to play honest. Their fate is so just! On coming out of Melun, I had saved nine hundred and some odd francs." "It is true," said the *Gros-Boiteux*, "all his misfortunes come from his having saved this money instead of spending it. You will see what repentance leads to, and whether one pays his expenses by it."

"They sent me under surveillance to Etampes," resumed Frank; "locksmith by trade, I went to seek employment; I said, 'I am a liberated convict; I know no one likes to employ them, but here are 300 francs of my savings; give me work, my money shall be your guarantee; I wish to labour and be honest.'"

"On my word, there is no one but this Frank could have such ideas."

"I proposed, then, my savings as a guarantee to the master locksmith, so that he might give me work. 'I am not a banker to take money on interest,' said he. 'I do not wish convicts in my shop; I work in houses, open doors the keys of which are lost; my trade is a confidential one, and if it were known that I had a convict among my workmen, I should lose my customers. Good-night, neighbour.' Did he not, Cardillac, get what he deserved?"

"Most certainly."

"Childish!" added the *Gros-Boiteux*, addressing Frank in a paternal manner, "instead of breaking your ban at once, and coming to Paris to fritter away your savings, so as to be without a sou in your pocket, and compelled to rob. Then one finds superb ideas."

"You tell me always the same thing!" said Frank, with impatience; "it is true, I was wrong not to spend my money, since I have not enjoyed it. As there were only four locksmiths at Etampes, he to whom I had first spoken had blabbed; when I addressed myself to the others, they told the same as their fellow. Thank you; everywhere the same song. So you see, friends, where is the use? We are marked for life!"

"Behold me *en grève* in the streets of Etampes! I lived on my money for two months," resumed Frank; "the money went, and no work came. I broke my ban—I left Etampes."

"That's what you should have done before."

"I came to Paris; there I found some work; my master did not know who I was; I told him I came from the country. There was no better workman than I myself. I placed 700 francs, which remained of my savings, with a broker, who gave me a note; when it fell due, he did not pay; I placed my note in the hands of an attorney, who sued and recovered; I left my money with him, and I said to myself, 'It is for a rainy day.' Then I met the *Gros-Boiteux*."

"Yes, my friends, and it was I who was the rainy day, as you will see. Frank was a locksmith; he manufactured keys; I had an affair in which he could serve me; I proposed it to him; I had impressions; he had only to copy them. The child refused; he wished to become honest; I said to myself, 'I must do him good in spite of himself.' I wrote a letter, without a signature, to his master, another to his companions, to inform them that Frank was a liberated convict. The master turned him out of doors, and his companions turned their backs upon him. He went to another master; worked there eight days; same game. If he had gone to ten more, I would have served him the same."

"And I did not then suspect that it was you who denounced me," said Frank, "otherwise you might have passed a disagreeable quarter of an hour."

"Yes; but I was no fool; I told you I was going to Lonjumeau to see my uncle; but I remained at Paris; and I knew all you did through the little Ledru."

"In short, they drove me away from my last master like a beggar, fit only to hang. Work then! be peaceable! so that one may say to you, not, what are you doing? but, what have you done? Once on the pavement, I said to myself, 'Happily, I have my money left.' I went to the attorney; he had cleared out—my money was gone—I was without a sou. I had not enough to pay a week's rent. You ought to have seen my rage! Thereupon the *Gros-Boiteux* pretended to arrive from Lonjumeau; he profited by my anger. I did not know on what nail to hang myself. I saw there was no means to be honest; that, once a robber, one was in for it for life! *Ma foi*, le *Gros-Boiteux* kept so close at my heels."

"Let this brave Frank scold no more," said the *Gros-Boiteux*; "he took his part boldly; he entered into the affair; it promised great things. Unfortunately, at the moment when we opened our mouths to swallow the morsel, nabbed by the police! What would you, *garçon*! it is a misfortune. The trade would be too fine without this."

"I don't care. If this 'gredin' of a lawyer had not robbed me I should not be here," said Frank, with rage.

"We speak of the *Squelette*! hold! here he is!" said Cardillac, pointing out the prevoist, who had just appeared at the door of the "*chauffoir*," to his companion.

"Cadet, advance at the call!" said Le *Squelette* to the *Gros-Boiteux*.

"Here!" he answered, advancing into the hall, accompanied by Frank, whom he took by the arm.

During the conversation of *Gros-Boiteux*, Frank, and Cardillac, Barbillion had been, by orders of the prevoist, to recruit twelve or fifteen prisoners, picked men. These, not to excite the suspicions of the keeper, had gone separately to the "*chauffoir*."

The other prisoners remained in the court; some of them, following the instructions of Barbillion, spoke in a loud, quarrelsome tone, to attract the notice of the keeper, and thus call his attention away from the "*chauffoir*," where were soon assembled Le *Squelette*, Barbillion, Nicolas, Frank, Cardillac, the *Gros-Boiteux*, and some fifteen other prisoners, all waiting with impatient curiosity until the prevoist should take the floor.

Barbillion, charged to spy and announce the approach of the superintendent, placed himself near the door. The *Squelette*, taking his pipe from his mouth, said to the *Gros-Boiteux*,

"Do you know a young man named Germain, with blue eyes, brown hair, and the air of a *pauvre*?" (honest man).

"Germain here!" cried the *Gros-Boiteux*, whose features expressed at once surprise, hatred, and anger.

"You know him, then?"

"Don't I know him? My friend, I denounce him! he is a *mangeur*! he must be rolled up!"

"Yes, yes!" said the prisoners together.

"Ah, *sa!* it is very sure that he has denounced?" asked Frank. "If you should be mistaken, and injure a man who does not deserve it!"

This observation displeased the *Squelette*, who leaned towards the *Gros-Boiteux*, and whispered,

"Who is this?" "A man with whom I have worked." "Are you sure of him?"

"Yes; that he is not made of gall—it is molasses."

"Enough; I'll keep my eye upon him."

"Let us hear how Germain is a *mangeur*?" said a prisoner. "Explain yourself, *Gros-Boiteux*," resumed Le *Squelette*, who watched Frank closely. "Here it is," said the *Gros-Boiteux*. "A Nantes man, named Vélou, an old convict, brought up this young fellow, whose parents are unknown. When he was old enough, he placed him in a banking-house at Nantes, intending to make use of him for an affair he had in view. He had two strings to his bow—a forgery, and robbery of the banker's strong box! perhaps a hundred thousand francs to gain by the two. All is ready; Vélou counted on the young man as on himself; this blackguard slept in the room where the strong box was kept; Vélou told him his plan; Germain neither said yes nor no, but told his patron all about it, and left the same evening for Paris."

The prisoners uttered violent threats and murmurs of indignation.

"If he is a *mangeur* we must bone him."

"If any one wishes it, I'll seek a quarrel, and I'll brain him."

"We must write on his face an order for the hospital."

"Silence in the *pègre*!" cried Le *Squelette*, in an imperious tone. "Continue!" he said to the *Gros-Boiteux*; and he recommenced smoking.

Believing that Germain had said yes, counting on his aid, Vélou and two of his friends attempted the affair the same night; the banker was on his guard, one of the friends of Vélou was nabbed in climbing a window, and he himself had the luck to escape. He arrived at Paris, furious at having been betrayed by Germain, and foiled in a superb affair. One fine day he met the nice young man; it was broad day; he did not dare to touch him; but he followed him; he saw where he lived, and one night, we two, Vélou and the little Ledru, pounced upon Germain. Unfortunately, he escaped us; he left his nest in the Rue du Temple, and since that time we have not been able to find him; but if he is here, I demand—"

"You have nothing to demand," said the *Squelette*, with authority. The *Gros-Boiteux* was silent.

"I take your bargain; you make over to me the skin of Germain, I'll take it off. I am not called Le *Squelette* for nothing. I am dead in advance; my grave is already dug at Clamart;

I risk nothing in working for *la pègre*; the *mangeurs* devour us more than the police; they place the *mangeurs* of La Force at La Roquette, and the *mangeurs* of La Roquette at the Consergerie, where they think themselves safe. Stop a moment; when each prison shall have killed its *mangeur*, no matter where he has *mangé*, that will take away the appetite from the others. I set the example—they will follow."

All the prisoners admiring the resolution of *Le Squelette*, crowded around him. Barbillion himself, instead of remaining near the door, joined the group, and did not perceive that a new prisoner had entered the "*chauffoir*."

This new comer, clothed in a gray blouse, and wearing a cap of blue cotton embroidered with red wool, pulled well over his eyes, started on hearing the name of Germain; then he went among the admirers of *Squelette*, and loudly approved both with voice and gesture the determination of the prevost.

"Isn't he a mad cap, *Le Squelette*?" said one.

"What a learned man!"

"The devil himself could not scare him."

"There's a man!" "If all the *pègres* had his effrontery, it would be they who would judge and guillotine the *pantes*."

"That would be just; every one in his turn."

"Yes; but they won't agree upon that subject."

"All the same; he renders a famous service to the *pègre* by killing them; the *mangeurs* will denounce no more."

"That is certain."

"And since *Le Squelette* is so sure of being cut down, it costs him nothing to kill the *mangeur*."

"As for me, I think it cruel to kill this young man!" said Frank.

"What! what!" cried *Le Squelette*, in an angry tone; "one has no right to pay off a traitor?"

"Yes, true, he is a traitor; so much the worse for him," said Frank, after a moment's reflection.

These last words, and the assurances of *Gros-Boiteux*, calmed the suspicions which Frank for a moment had raised among the prisoners.

Le Squelette alone remained doubtful.

"Ah, ça! and what shall we do with the keeper?"

"Say then, *mort d'avance* (dead in anticipation), for this is as much your name as *Le Squelette*," said Nicolas, laughing.

"Well! some will engage his attention on one side." "No: we will hold him by force."

"Yes." "No."

"Silence in the *pègre*!" cried *Le Squelette*.

The most profound quiet ensued.

"Listen to me well," resumed the prevost, in a hoarse voice; "there are no means to do the job while the keeper is in the '*chauffoir*' or the court. I have no knife; there will be some stifled cries—the *mangeur* will struggle."

"Then what is to be done?"

"This is my plan: *Pique-Vinaigre* has promised to relate to us to-day, after dinner, his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*. It rains, we will all retire here, and the *mangeur* will come and take his seat in the corner, in his usual place. We will give some sous to *Pique-Vinaigre* to make him commence his story. It will be the prison dinner hour. The keeper seeing us quietly occupied in listening to the nonsense of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*, will have no suspicions; he will go and take a pull at the canteen. As soon as he has left the court, we have a quarter of an hour to ourselves—the *mangeur*

will be *mangé* before the guard returns. I take it upon myself. I have done the job for more stubborn fellows than he. But I wish no help."

"A moment," cried Cardillac; "and the *huissier*, who always comes lounging here at dinner-time. If he should enter the '*chauffoir*' to listen to *Pique-Vinaigre*, and should see us fixing Germain, he is likely to cry for help; he is not a man in breeches; he can fire a pistol, look out."

"That is true," said *Le Squelette*.

"There is a *huissier* here!" cried Frank, the victim, as is known, of the *Maitre Boulard*; "there is a *huissier* here!" he added, with astonishment.

"And what is his name?"

"Boulard," said Cardillac.

"It is my man," cried Frank, doubling his fists; "it is he who stole my savings."

"The *huissier*?" asked the prevost.

"Yes; seven hundred and twenty francs which he collected for me."

"You know him? he has seen you?" asked *Le Squelette*.

"I think I have seen him, to my sorrow. But for him I should not be here."

These regrets sounded badly in the ears of *Le Squelette*; he fixed his squinting eyes on Frank, who answered some questions of his comrades; then leaning over towards the *Gros-Boiteux*, he whispered in a low tone, "Here is a youngster who is capable of informing the keepers of our plot."

"No: I answer for him; he will denounce no one, but he is still a little timid about crime, and he might be capable of defending Germain. Better get him out of the way."

"Enough," said *Le Squelette*; and he said in a loud tone, "I say, Frank, won't you have a settlement with this brigand of a *huissier*?"

"Let me alone; let him come, his account is made out." "He is coming, get ready."

"I am all ready; he will bear my mark."

"That will make a scuffle; they will send the *huissier* to his *pistole* and Frank to the dungeon," whispered *Le Squelette* to the *Gros-Boiteux*; "we shall get rid of both."

"What, ahead! This *Squelette*, is he not a trump?" said the bandit, with admiration; then he resumed aloud, "Ah, ça! shall *Pique-Vinaigre* be informed that by the assistance of his story we mean to stuff the keeper and cut down the *mangeur*?"

"No; *Pique-Vinaigre* has too much molasses in his composition, and is too great a coward; if he knew it, he would not tell his story; the blow struck, he will bear his part."

The dinner-bell rang.

"To your grub, dogs!" said *Le Squelette*; "*Pique-Vinaigre* and Germain are going to enter the court. Attention, friends! they call me *mort d'avance*, but the *mangeur*, also, is *mort d'avance*."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE STORY-TELLER.

THE new prisoner of whom we have spoken, who wore a cotton cap and gray blouse, had attentively listened to, and energetically approved the plot which threatened the life of Germain. This man, of athletic form, left the "*chauffoir*" with the other prisoners, without having been remarked, and soon mingled with the dissem-

troops that pressed into the court around the persons who distributed the beef, which they brought in copper vessels, and the bread, in huge baskets.

Each prisoner received a piece of boiled beef, which had served to make the soup for the morning meal, with half a loaf of bread, superior in quality to that given to soldiers.

The prisoners who had money could buy wine at the "*cantine*," and go there to drink what was called in prison slang, "*la gobette*."

Those who, like Nicolas, had received victuals from out of doors, got up a feast to which they invited the other prisoners. The guests of the son of the widow were Le Squelette, Barbillon, and, upon the latter's recommendation, Pique-Vinaigre, in order to get him in a good-humour for telling stories.

The ham, the hard eggs, the cheese and white bread, due to the forced liberality of Micou the receiver, were spread out on one of the benches of the "*chauffoir*," and Le Squelette prepared to do honour to this repast, without feeling any inquietude concerning the murder he was about to commit.

"Go and see if this Pique-Vinaigre is never coming. While I am waiting to choke Germain, I choke with hunger and thirst; do not forget to say to the Gros-Boiteux that Frank must pull the hair of the *huissier* so that the *Fosse aux Lions* may be rid of them both."

"Be easy, *mort d'avance*; if Frank does not pitch into the *huissier*, it will not be our fault."

And Nicolas left the "*chauffoir*."

At this moment, Maitre Boulard entered the yard smoking a cigar, his hands plunged into his long surtout of gray moleskin, his cap drawn over his ears, his face smiling and gay; he spied Nicolas, who, on his side, looked at Frank.

The latter and the Gros-Boiteux were dining, seated on one of the benches of the court; they had not perceived the *huissier*, to whom their backs were turned. Faithful to the recommendations of Le Squelette, Nicolas, seeing with the corner of his eye Maitre Boulard coming towards him, appeared not to remark him, and drew nearer to Frank and the Gros-Boiteux.

"Good-day, 'mon brave,'" said the *huissier* to Nicolas. "Ah! good-day, monsieur, I did not see you; you come, as usual, to take a little walk?" "Yes, my boy, and to-day I have two reasons for doing it. I am going to tell you why; but first take these cigars. Come, now, among comrades—the devil! one must not stand on ceremony."

"Thank you, monsieur. *Ah ça!* why have you two reasons for walking?"

"You will understand it, my boy; I do not feel any appetite to-day. I said to myself, looking at these gay boys at their dinner, and seeing them make use of their jaws, perhaps hunger will come." "Not so bad. But look this way if you wish to see two 'cadets' who eat lustily," said Nicolas, leading the *huissier* by degrees near the bench of Frank, whose back was turned; "just look at these two *swallow-runs*, your hunger will come as if you had just eaten a whole bottle of pickles."

"Ah! parbleu; let us see this phenomenon," said Maitre Boulard.

"Eh! Gros-Boiteux!" cried Nicolas.

The Gros-Boiteux and Frank quickly turned their heads. The *huissier* was stupefied, and stood with his mouth open on recognising him whom he had swindled.

Frank, throwing his bread and meat on the bench, with one bound jumped at Maitre Boulard, whom he caught by the throat, crying,

"My money!"

"How? What? monsieur—you strangle me. I—" "My money!"

"My friend, listen to me."

"My money! And yet it is too late, for it is your fault that I am here."

"But—I—but—"

"If I go to the galleys, mark me, it is your fault; for if I had that of which you robbed me, I should not have been under the necessity of stealing. I should have remained honest as I wished to be. And you will be acquitted, perhaps—you—they will do nothing to you. I—but I will do something to you. I—you shall bear my marks. Ah! you have jewels, gold chains, and you rob! There—there—have you enough? No—here, take some more!"

"Help! help!" cried the *huissier*, rolling under the feet of Frank, who struck him furiously.

The other prisoners, very indifferent to this squabble, made a circle round the two combatants, or, rather, round the beating and the beaten, for Maitre Boulard, panting and much alarmed, made no resistance, but endeavoured to parry, as well as he could, the blows of his adversary.

Happily, the superintendent ran, on hearing the cries of the *huissier*, and released him from his peril.

Maitre Boulard arose, pale and trembling, with one of his large eyes bruised, and, without giving himself time to pick up his cap, cried, as he ran towards the wicket,

"Keeper—open for me; I do not wish to remain a moment longer—help!"

"And you, for having struck monsieur, follow me to the director," said the keeper, taking Frank by the collar; "you will go to the dungeon two days for this." "I don't care; he has got his pay."

"*Ah ça!*" whispered the Gros-Boiteux to Frank, pretending to adjust his clothes, "not a word of what they are going to do to the *mangeur*."

"Be easy; perhaps, if I had been there, I should have defended him; for to kill a man for that is hard; but denounce you? never."

"Allons, will you come?" said the keeper.

"There, we are rid of the *huissier* and Frank now; hot work, hot work for the *mangeur*!" said Nicolas.

As Frank left the court, Germain and Pique-Vinaigre entered.

Germain was no longer recognisable; his physiognomy, formerly so sad and cast down, was radiant with joy; he carried his head erect, and cast around him a cheerful and assured glance—he was beloved—the horrors of the prison disappeared from before his eyes.

Pique-Vinaigre followed him with an embarrassed air; at length, after having hesitated two or three times to accost him, he made a great effort, and slightly touched the arm of Germain before he had approached the group of prisoners, who, at a distance, were examining him with sullen hatred. Their victim could not escape.

In spite of himself, Germain shuddered at the touch of Pique-Vinaigre; for the face and rags of the "*ci-devant*" juggler did not speak much in his favour. But, recollecting the advice of Rigolette, and, besides, finding himself too happy not to be benevolent, Germain stopped, and said kindly to Pique-Vinaigre,

"What do you wish?"

"To thank you." "For what?" "For what your pretty little visitor wishes to do for my sister." "I do not understand you," said Germain, surprised.

"I am going to explain. Just now, at the office, I met the superintendent, who was on guard in the *parloir*." "Ah, yes; a very good man." "Ordinarily, the jailers do not agree with that description. But the *Père Roussel*, it is another thing; he deserves it. Just now he slipped into the tunnel of my ear, 'Pique-Vinaigre, my boy, do you know M. Germain well?' 'Yes; the butt of the yard,' I answered." Then, interrupting himself, Pique-Vinaigre said to Germain, "Pardon, excuse me, if I have called you a butt. Do not think of it; wait for the end." "Yes, then," I answered; "I know M. Germain, the butt of the prison." "And yours also, perhaps, Pique-Vinaigre?" asked the keeper, in a severe tone. "Monsieur, I am too cowardly and too good-natured to allow myself any kind of a butt, black, white, or gray, and M. Germain still less than any other; for he does not appear wicked, and they are unjust towards him." "Well, Pique-Vinaigre, you have reason to be on M. Germain's side, for he has been good to you." "To me? How so?" "That is to say, not to you; but, saving that, you owe him great gratitude," answered the *Père Roussel*. "Let us see; explain yourself a little more clearly," said Germain, smiling.

"That is exactly what I said to the keeper: 'Do speak more clearly.' Then he answered, 'It is not M. Germain, but his pretty little visitor, who has been full of kindness for your sister. She overheard her relate to you her misfortunes, and, as she was about leaving the *parloir*, the young girl offered her any assistance she could render.'"

"Good Rigolette!" cried Germain, affected. "She took good care not to mention it."

"Oh! then," I answered the keeper, "I am only a gander. You are right; M. Germain has been good to me; for his visitor is, as may be said, himself, and my sister Jeanne is myself and much more."

"Poor little Rigolette!" said Germain. "This does not surprise me; she has a heart so generous, so susceptible."

"The keeper went on: 'I heard all this without pretending to listen. Now you know it, if you do not try to render a service to M. Germain; if you do not advise him in case of any plot against him, you would be a finished scoundrel, Pique-Vinaigre.' 'Keeper, I am a scoundrel,' commenced I, 'it is true; but not a finished scoundrel. In fine, since the visitor of M. Germain wished to do some good to my poor Jeanne, who is a good and honest girl, I will do for M. Germain what I can; unfortunately, that will be no great things.'"

"Never mind, do what you can; I am also going to give you some good news for M. Germain; I have just heard it." "What is it, then?" asked Germain. "To-morrow there will be a cell vacant *à la pistole*; the keeper told me to inform you."

"Can it be true? Oh! what happiness!" cried Germain. "This good man was right; it is good news you tell me."

"I think so, for your place is not with folks like us, Monsieur Germain." Then he added hastily, and in a low tone, as he pretended to stoop for something, "Hold, Monsieur Germain;

look at the prisoners; how they stare at us; they are astonished to see us talking together. Leave you; be on your guard. If they seek a quarrel, do not answer; they only want a pretext to engage you in a dispute, and beat you. Barbillon is to begin the dispute—look out for him; I will try to turn them from this notion." And Pique-Vinaigre lifted up his head as if he had found what he had pretended to look for. Only informed of the conspiracy of the morning, which was to provoke a quarrel in which Germain would be roughly handled, in order to force the director to change his ward, not only was Pique-Vinaigre ignorant of the murderous project of *Le Squelette*, but he was also ignorant that they counted on his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux* to deceive and distract the attention of the keeper.

"Come, then, lazy-bones," said Nicolas to Pique-Vinaigre, going to meet him; "leave your ration of flesh there; we have a merry-making and feasting. I invite you."

"Whereabouts? at the *Panier Fleuri*? at the *Petit Ramponneau*?"

"*Farceur!* No, in the *chauffoir*; the table is set on a bench. We have some gammon, eggs, and cheese—my treat."

"That suits me; but it is a pity to lose my ration, and still more that my sister cannot profit by it. Neither she nor her children often see meat, except at the door of the butcher."

"Come, come quick, *Le Squelette* is making a beast of himself; he is capable of devouring the whole with Barbillon."

Nicolas and Pique-Vinaigre entered the "*chauffoir*;" *Le Squelette*, seated astride on the end of the bench where the feast was spread, swore and cursed while waiting for the giver of the banquet.

"Here you are at last, saill, laggard!" cried the bandit, at the sight of Pique-Vinaigre; "what have you been doing, then?"

"He was talking with Germain," said Nicolas, carving the ham.

"Ah! you were talking with Germain?" said *Le Squelette*, looking attentively at Pique-Vinaigre, without pausing in his mastication.

"Yes!" answered the "*conteur*" (story teller). "Ah! here is another who never invented boot-jacks and hard eggs (I say eggs because I adore them). Isn't he a fool! this Germain! I used to think that he was a spy, but he is too much of a flat for that!"

"Ah! you think so?" said *Le Squelette*, exchanging a rapid and significant glance with Nicolas and Barbillon.

"I am as sure of it as that I see ham! And, then, how the devil would you have him spy? he is always alone; he speaks to no one, and no one speaks to him; he runs away from us as if we had the cholera. Besides, he will not spy for a long time; he is going to be *à la pistole*."

"He!" cried *Le Squelette*; "and when?"

"To-morrow morning there will be a cell vacant."

"You see we must kill him at once. He does not sleep in my ward; to-morrow will be too late. To-day we have only until four o'clock, and now it is almost three," whispered *Le Squelette* to Nicolas, while Pique-Vinaigre talked with Barbillon.

"All the same," answered Nicolas aloud, pretending to answer an observation of *Le Squelette*. "Germain looks as if he despises us."

"On the contrary, my children," answered

"Pique-Vinaigre, "you intimidate this young man. He looks upon himself, in comparison with you, as the least of the least. Just now, what do you think he said?"

"How should I know?"

"He said to me, 'You are very happy, Pique-Vinaigre, to dare to speak with this famous Squelette (he used the word famous), as an equal and a companion. I am dying to speak to him; but he produces an effect upon me so respectful—so respectful—that, should I see monsieur the prefect of the police in flesh, and bones, and uniform, I could not be more overcome.'"

"He told you that?" replied Le Squelette, feigning to believe him, and to be flattered at the admiration he excited in Germain.

"As true as that you are the greatest brigand on the earth, he told me so."

"Then it is different," answered Le Squelette; "I must make up with him. Barbillion had a mind to pick a quarrel, but he, too, will do well to let him alone."

"He will do better," cried Pique-Vinaigre, persuaded that he had turned away the danger with which Germain was threatened. "He will do better, for this poor fellow won't dispute; he is one of my kind, bold as a hare."

"Yet it is a pity," said Le Squelette: "we reckoned on this quarrel to amuse us after dinner, the time appears so long."

"Yes. What shall we do, then?" asked Nicolas.

"Since it is so, let Pique-Vinaigre tell us a story. I will not seek a quarrel with Germain," said Barbillion.

"Agreed, agreed!" cried the "conteur." "That is one condition; but there is another, and without both I tell no stories."

"Come, what is your other condition?"

"It is, that the honourable society which is poisoned with capitalists," said Pique-Vinaigre, assuming his mountebank twang, "will make for me the trifle of a contribution of twenty sous. Twenty sous, messieurs, to hear the famous Pique-Vinaigre, who has had the honour to perform before the most renowned robbers, before the most famous rogues of France and Navarre, and who is immediately expected at Brest and at Toulon, where he goes by order of the government. Twenty sous! It is nothing, messieurs!"

"Come, you shall have twenty sous when you have told the story."

"After? No; before!" cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Ah, ca! I say, do you think us capable of cheating you out of twenty sous?" said Le Squelette, with a displeased air.

"Not at all," answered Pique-Vinaigre; "I honour the *pégre* with my confidence, and it is to spare its purse that I ask twenty sous in advance."

"On your word of honour?"

"Yes, messieurs; for, after my tale is finished, you will be so satisfied that it is no longer twenty sous, but twenty francs—but a hundred francs that you will force me to take! I know, myself, I would have the *messieurs* to accept the offering; so, you see, that, for economy's sake, you will do better to give me twenty sous in advance."

"Oh! you are not wanting in jaw."

"I have nothing but my tongue; I must use it; and then, the point of the matter is, that my sister and her children are in extreme want, and twenty sous in a small circle is felt."

"Why does she not *grinche*? and her children also, if they are old enough?" said Nicolas.

"Do not speak of it; it wounds me, it dishonours me. I am too good."

"You had better say too stupid, since you encourage her." "It is true, I encourage her in the vice of honesty. But she is only good for that trade—she makes me pity her. Ah, ca! it is agreed. I will relate to you my famous history of Gringalet et Coupe en Deux; but I must have my twenty sous; and Barbillion will not seek a quarrel with that imbecile Germain."

"You shall have your twenty sous, and Barbillion shall not pick a quarrel with the imbecile Germain," said Le Squelette.

"Then open your ears, for you are going to hear something choice. But here is the rain, which sends in the guests; there will be no need to go after them."

In fact, the rain began to fall, the prisoners left the court, and came to take refuge in the "chauffoir," always accompanied by a keeper. We have already said that this *chauffoir* was a long paved room, lighted by windows looking out on the court; in the centre was placed the stove, near which were Le Squelette, Barbillion, Nicolas, and Pique-Vinaigre. At a nod from the provost, Le Gros-Boiteux joined the group.

Germain entered among the last, absorbed in delightful thoughts. He went mechanically to seat himself on the ledge of the farthest window in the room, a place he habitually occupied, and which no one disputed; for it was far from the stove, around which the prisoners clustered.

We have said that only some fifteen of the prisoners had been informed at first of the intended murder of Germain. But, soon divulged, this project counted as many adherents as there were prisoners; these wretches, in their blind cruelty, regarded this frightful plot as a legitimate vengeance, and saw in it a certain guarantee against the future denunciations of the *man-gueurs*.

Germain, Pique-Vinaigre, and the keeper were alone ignorant of what was about to take place. The general attention was divided between the executioner, the victim, and the "conteur," who was about innocently to deprive Germain of the only succour which he had to depend upon; for it was almost certain that the keeper, seeing the prisoners attentive to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, would believe his presence useless, and profit by this moment of calm to go and take his rest.

When all the prisoners had entered, Le Squelette said to the keeper,

"I say, old man, Pique-Vinaigre has a good idea: he is going to tell us his story of *Gringalet et Coupe en Deux*. The weather is so bad it is not fit to put a constable out of doors; we are going to wait here quietly for the time to go to our nests." "True enough, when he talks, you keep yourselves quiet. At least, there is no need of being behind your backs."

"Yes," replied Le Squelette; "but Pique-Vinaigre charges high for telling a story: he wants twenty sous."

"Yes, the bagatelle of twenty sous; and then it is for nothing," cried Pique-Vinaigre. "Yes, messieurs, nothing; for one should not keep a 'lard' in his pocket, and thus deprive himself of the pleasure of hearing the adventures of poor little *Gringalet*, of the terrible *Coupe en Deux*, and the wicked *Gorgousse*; it is enough to break one's heart, to make your the hair stand on

end. Now, messieurs, who is it that cannot spare the bagatelle of four 'liards,' or, if you prefer to count in kilometres, the trifle of five centimes, to have the heart broken and the hair made to stand on end?"

"I give two sous!" said Le Squelette; and he threw his piece towards Pique-Vinaigre. "Allons! shall the *pègre* be stingy for such an entertainment?" he added, looking at his accomplices with a significant air. Several sous were thrown from one side and the other, to the great joy of Pique-Vinaigre, who thought of his sister as he made his collection. "Eight, nine, eleven, twelve, thirteen!" he cried, picking up his money; "come, messieurs the rich folks, capitalists and other bankers, one more little effort; you cannot remain at thirteen, it is an unlucky number. Only seven sous wanting—the bagatelle of seven sous! How, messieurs, shall it be said that the *pègre* of the *Fosse aux Lions* cannot raise seven sous more—seven miserable sous! Ah! messieurs, you will lead me to think that you have been placed here unjustly, or that you have been very unlucky."

The piercing voice and the witticisms of Pique-Vinaigre had roused Germain from his reverie; as much to follow the advice of Rigolette, to make himself popular, as to make a slight donation to this poor devil who had shown some desire to be useful to him, he arose and threw a piece of ten sous at the feet of the "*conteur*," who cried, showing to the crowd the generous donor,

"Ten sous, messieurs! you see, I spoke of capitalists; honour to monsieur, he acts the banker, the ambassador, to be agreeable to the society. Yes, messieurs! for it is to him you will owe the greater part of *Gringalet* and *Coupe en Deux*, and you will thank him for it. As to the three sous surplus caused by his donation, I will deserve them by imitating the voices of my personages, instead of speaking in my ordinary manner. This shall be another delight that you will owe to this rich capitalist, whom you must adore."

"Come, don't jaw so much, but begin," said Le Squelette. "A moment, messieurs," said Pique-Vinaigre; "it is but just that this capitalist, who has given me ten sous, should have the best place, except our provost, who must choose first." This proposition answered the purpose of Le Squelette so well, that he cried,

"It is true, after me he should be the best seated." And the bandit again cast a look of intelligence at the prisoners.

"Yes, yes, let him approach," they cried.

"Let him take the front seat."

"You see, young man, your liberality is recompensed; the honourable society recognises that you have the right to the first seat," said Pique-Vinaigre to Germain.

Believing that his liberality had really disposed his odious companions in his favour, enchanted thus to follow the advice of Rigolette, Germain, in spite of his repugnance, left his seat, and approached the "*conteur*."

He, aided by Nicolas and Barbillon, having arranged around the stove the four or five benches of the "*chauffoir*," said with emphasis,

"Here are front boxes! honour to whom honour is due; in the first place the capitalist. Now, let those who have paid seat themselves on the benches," added Pique-Vinaigre, gayly, firmly believing that Germain had, thanks to him, no more danger to apprehend. "And those who

have not paid," he added, "will sit on the ground or stand up, as they choose."

Let us glance at the arrangements as now completed.

Pique-Vinaigre, standing near the stove, was getting ready to commence his story.

Near him, Le Squelette, also standing, ready to spring on Germain the moment the keeper should leave the hall.

At some distance from Germain, Nicolas, Barbillon, Cardillac, and some other prisoners, among whom was seen the man in the blue cotton cap and gray blouse, occupied the back benches.

The larger number of prisoners grouped here and there, some seated on the ground, others standing and leaning against the walls, composed the background of this picture, lighted, after the manner of Rembrandt, by the three lateral windows, which cast a vivid light and deep shade on these figures, so differently characterized and so strongly marked.

The keeper, who, without knowing it, was, by his departure, to give the signal for the murder of Germain, stood near the half-opened door.

"All ready?" said Pique-Vinaigre to Le Squelette. "Silence in the *pègre*!" answered the latter, half turning round; then addressing Pique-Vinaigre, "Now, begin your story: we listen."

A profound silence reigned in the "*chauffoir*."

CHAPTER XXVII.

GRINGALET ET COUPE EN DOUX.

"Rien de plus doux, de plus salutaire, de plus précieux, que vos paroles, elles charment, elles encouragent, elles améliorent."—WOLFRAND, liv. iv.

BEFORE we commence the recital of Pique-Vinaigre, we will recall to our readers that, by a strange contrast, the majority of the prisoners, notwithstanding their cynical perversity, almost always preferred artless stories (we would not say puerile), in which the oppressed, by the laws of an inexorable fatality, is revenged on his tyrant, after trials and difficulties without number.

The thought is far from us, to establish the slightest parallel between corrupted beings and the honest and poor masses; but it is not known with what phrensied applause the audience at the theatres of the Boulevards behold the deliverance of the victim, and with what curses they pursue the traitor and the wicked!

One ordinarily laughs at these rough evidences of sympathy for that which is good, weak, and persecuted; of aversion for that which is powerful, unjust, and cruel.

It seems to us that to laugh at this is wrong.

Nothing is more innately consoling than these feelings of the multitude.

Is it not evident that these salutary instincts may become fixed principles in those unfortunate beings whom ignorance and poverty expose to the subversive attacks of evil? Why not have every hope of a people whose good moral sense is so invariably manifested? of a people who, in spite of the fascinations of art, will never permit a dramatic work to arrive at its denouement by the triumph of the wicked and the punishment of the just!

This fact, scorned and laughed at though it

he, appears to us of considerable importance on account of the tendencies which it proves, and which are even often found (we repeat it) among beings the most corrupt, when they are, so to speak, in repose, and sheltered from criminal temptations or necessities. In a word, since men hardened in crime, still sometimes sympathize with the recital and expression of elevated sentiments, ought we not to believe that all men have more or less in them of the love of the good, the well doing, the just; but that poverty and ignorance, in falsifying, in stifling, these Divine instincts, are the first causes of human depravity!

Is it not evident that generally one does not become wicked except through misfortune, and that to snatch man from the terrible temptations of want by the equitable melioration of his material condition, is to make him capable of the virtues of which he is conscious!

The impression caused by the story of Pique-Vinaigre will demonstrate, or rather display, we hope, some of the ideas we have just set forth. Pique-Vinaigre then commenced his story in these terms, in the midst of the profound silence of his auditory:

"It is not very long since the events occurred which I am going to relate to this honourable society. That which was called *La Petite Pologne* was not yet destroyed. Does the honourable society know what was called *La Petite Pologne*!"

"I remember," said the prisoner in the blue cap and gray blouse, "it was some small houses near the Rue du Rocher, and the Rue de la Pépinière."

"Exactly, mon garçon," replied Vinaigre; "the 'quartier' of la cité, which, however, is not composed of palaces, would be a Rue de la Paix, or a Rue de Rivoli, alongside of *La Petite Pologne*; but, otherwise, a famous resort for the *pègre*; there were no streets, but lanes; no houses, but hovels; no pavement, but a little carpet of mud and manure, so that the noise of the carriages would not have incommoded you if any had passed; but none passed. From morning to night, and, above all, from night to morning, what one did not cease to hear, were cries, 'watch!' 'help!' 'murder!' but the watch did not disturb himself. So many the more with their brains dashed out in *La Petite Pologne*—so many the less to be arrested!"

"The swarming population therein, you should have seen it; very few jewellers, goldsmiths, or bankers lodged there; but, to make amends, there were heaps of organ-players, rope-dancers, Punch and Judies, or keepers of curious beasts. Among the latter, was one named *Coupe en Deux* (cut in two), so cruel was he; but he was, above all, cruel towards children. They called him *Coupe en Deux*, so they said, because, with a hatchet, he had cut in two a little Savoyard."

At this part of the story of Pique-Vinaigre, the clock of the prison struck a quarter past three.

The prisoners entering their sleeping apartments at four o'clock, the crime of *Le Squelette* was to be consummated before that hour.

"Thousand thunders! the keeper does not go," he whispered to the Gros-Boiteux.

"Be quiet; once the story in train, he will leave." Pique-Vinaigre continued his recital.

"No one knew whence *Coupe en Deux* came; some said he was an Italian, others a Bohemian, others a Turk, others an African; the old women called him a magician, although a magician in these days may appear droll; as for me, I should be quite tempted to say the same as the old women. What makes this likely, is, that he always had with him a great red ape called *Gargousse*, which was so cunning and wicked, that one would have said he had the devil in his belly. By-and-by I shall speak again of *Gargousse*. As to *Coupe en Deux*, I am going to show him up: he had a skin the colour of a boot-lining, hair as red as the hide of his ape, green eyes, and that which makes me think with the old women that he was a magician, is, that he had a black tongue."

"Black tongue!" said Barbillon.

"Black as ink!" answered Pique Vinaigre.

"And how is that?"

"Because before he was born, his mother had probably spoken of a negro," answered Pique Vinaigre, with modest assurance. "To this ornament, *Coupe en Deux* joined the trade of having I do not know how many tortoises, apes, Indian hogs, white mice, foxes, and marmots, with an equal number of little Savoyards or abandoned children."

"Every morning, *Coupe en Deux* distributed to each one his beast and a piece of black bread, and started them off, to beg for a sou or '*faire danser La Catalina*.' Those who, at night, brought back less than fifteen sous, were beaten, oh! how they were beaten! so that they were heard to cry from one end of *La Petite Pologne* to the other.

"I must tell you also that there was in *La Petite Pologne*, a man who was called the *doyen*, because he was the longest resident of this 'quartier,' and also the mayor, provost, justice of the peace, or, rather, of war, for it was in his court (he was a wine merchant) that they went to comb one another's heads, when there was no other way to settle their disputes. Although quite old, the *doyen* was strong as a Hercules and very much feared; they only swore by him in *La Petite Pologne*: when he said 'it is good,' every one said 'it is very good;' when he said 'it is bad,' every one said 'it is very bad;' he was a good man at the bottom, but terrible; when, for example, strong people caused misery to the weaker, then, stand from under.

"As the *doyen* was the neighbour of *Coupe en Deux*, he had in the commencement heard the children cry, on account of the blows which the owner of the beasts gave them; but he said to him, 'If I hear the children cry again, I'll make you cry in your turn, and, as you have a stronger voice, I'll strike harder.'"

"Farceur of a *doyen*! I like the *doyen*!" said the prisoner in a blue cap.

"And so do I." added the keeper, approaching the group. *Le Squelette* could not restrain a movement of angry impatience.

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Thanks to the *doyen*, who had threatened *Coupe en Deux*, the children were no more heard to cry at night in *La Petite Pologne*; but the poor little unfortunates did not suffer the

less, for if they did not cry when their master beat them, it was because they feared to be beaten still more. As for going and complaining to the *doyen*, they never had such an idea. For the fifteen sous which each of the little boys was obliged to bring him, Coupe en Deux fed them, lodged them, and clothed them.

"At night, a piece of black bread, the same for breakfast—that was the way he fed them; he never gave them any clothes—that was the way he clothed them; and he shut them up at night pell-mell with their beasts, on the same straw, in a garret to which they clambered by a ladder and through a trap-door—and that was the way he lodged them. Once the beasts and children all housed, he took away the ladder and locked the trap-door with a key.

"You may imagine the noise and uproar which these apes, Indian hogs, foxes, mice, tortoises, marmots, and children made, without any light, in this garret, which was as large as nothing. Coupe en Deux slept in a room underneath, having his large ape Gargousse tied to the foot of the bed. When the noise was too loud in the garret, the owner of the beasts arose, took a large whip, mounted the ladder without a light, opened the trap, and lashed away at random.

"As he always had some fifteen boys, and some of them brought, the *innocents*, sometimes as much as twenty sous a day, Coupe en Deux, his expenses paid, and they were not heavy, had for himself about four or five francs each day; with that, he frolicked, for note well that he was the greatest drinker on the earth, and was regularly dead drunk once every day. It was his rule, he said; except for that he would have a headache all the day long; it must be said, also, that from his gains he bought sheep's hearts for Gargousse, the big ape eating raw meat like a voracious animal.

"But I see that the honourable society asks for Gringalet; here he is, messieurs."

"Ah! let us see Gringalet, and then I'll go and eat my soup," said the keeper.

Le Squelette exchanged a look of ferocious satisfaction with the Gros-Boiteux.

"Among the children to whom Coupe en Deux distributed his beasts," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, "there was a poor little devil nicknamed Gringalet. Without father or mother, without sister or brother, without a home, he found himself alone—all alone in the world, where he never asked to come, and whence he could have gone, without anybody caring at all about it. He was not called Gringalet for his pleasure; he was dwarfish, and puny, and needy; no one would have given him over seven or eight years, yet he was thirteen; but if he did not look more than half his age, it was not his fault, for he had not on the average eaten more than every other day, and then so little, so little—and so bad, so bad, that he really did very well in appearing to be seven."

"Poor 'moutard,' I think I see him," said the prisoner in the blue cap; "there are so many like him in the streets of Paris, little starve-to-deaths."

"They ought to begin to learn that trade young," replied Pique-Vinaigre, bitterly; "so that they can become used to it."

"Come, go on then, make haste," said Le

Squelette, gruffly; "the keeper is impatient, his soup is growing cold."

"Ah, bah! never mind," answered the keeper; "I wish to make a little more acquaintance with Gringalet; it is amusing."

"Really, it is very interesting," added Germain, attentive to the story.

"Ah, thank you! for what you say, my capitalist; that gives me more pleasure than your ten sous."

"Thunder of a laggard!" cried Le Squelette, "will you have done keeping us waiting!"

"Voilà!" answered Pique-Vinaigre.

"One day, Coupe en Deux had picked up Gringalet in the street, dying with cold and hunger; he would have done just as well to let him alone and die. As Gringalet was feeble, he was afraid; and as he was cowardly, he became the laughing-stock and scapegoat of his companions, who beat him, and caused him so much misery, that he would have been very wicked, if strength and courage had not failed him.

"But, no: when they beat him, he cried, saying, 'I have done no harm to any one, yet every one harms me—it is unjust. Oh! if I were strong, and bold!' You think, perhaps, that Gringalet was going to add, 'I would return to others the evil they did me.' Well, no! not at all: he said, 'Oh! if I were strong and bold, I would defend the weak against the strong; for I am weak, and the strong make me suffer.'

"In the mean time, as he was too much of a pigny to prevent the strong from molesting the weak, he prevented the larger beasts from injuring the smaller ones."

"There's a funny idea!" said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"And, what is still more funny," replied the "conteur," "is, that, with this idea, one would have said, that Gringalet consoled himself for being beaten; and that proves that, at the bottom, he had not a bad heart."

"Pardieu, I think so—on the contrary," said the keeper. "Devil of a Pique-Vinaigre, isn't he amusing!"

At this moment, the clock struck half past three.

The Squelette and Gros-Boiteux exchanged significant glances.

The hour advanced, the keeper did not retire, and some of the least hardened prisoners seemed almost to forget the sinister projects of the Squelette against Germain, who listened with eagerness to the recital of Pique-Vinaigre.

"When I say," he resumed, "that Gringalet prevented the larger beasts from eating the smaller ones, you will please understand, that Gringalet did not go and interfere in the affairs of the tigers, lions, wolves, or even the foxes and apes of the menagerie of Coupe en Deux—he was too cowardly for that; but, as soon as he saw, for example, a spider concealed in his web, to catch a poor foolish fly that was buzzing about gayly in the sun of the 'bon Dieu,' without harming any one, crack! Gringalet gave a sweep into the web, delivered the fly, and crushed the spider, like a real Cæsar. Yes! like a real Cæsar! for he became as white as chalk at even touching these villainous creatures; he needed, then, resolution: he who was afraid of a lady-bug, and who had taken a very long time

to become familiar with the tortoise which *Coupe en Deux* handed over to him every morning. Thus, Gringalet, in overcoming the alarm which spiders caused him, to prevent the flies from being eaten, showed himself—

"Showed himself as bold, in his way, as a man who would have attacked a wolf, to take from him a lamb of the fold," said the prisoner in the blue cap.

"Or as a man who would have attacked *Coupe en Deux*, to drag Gringalet from his claws," added Barbillon, also much interested.

"As you say," replied Pique-Vinagre. "Accordingly, after these doings, Gringalet did not feel so very unfortunate. He who never laughed, smiled, looked wise, put on his cap sideways (when he had a cap), and sang the *Mar-seilloise* with a trumpet air. At such times, there was not a spider that dared to look him in the face.

"Another time it was a cricket that was drowning and struggling in a gutter; quickly Gringalet bravely plunged two of his fingers into the waves and caught the cricket, which he afterward placed on a blade of grass: a master swimmer with a medal, who should have fished up his tenth drowned person, at fifty francs the head, could not have been more proud than Gringalet, when he saw his cricket kick and run away.

"And yet the cricket gave him neither money nor a medal, and did not even say thank you, nor did the fly. But then, Pique-Vinagre, my friend, will the honourable society say, what kind of pleasure Gringalet, whom every one beats, could find in being the deliverer of crickets and the executioner of spiders! Since others injured him, why did he not revenge himself in doing harm according to his strength? for example, by causing the flies to be eaten by spiders, or in letting the crickets drown themselves; or even drowning them himself?"

"Yes, exactly: why did he not revenge himself in that way?" said Nicolas.

"What good would that have done him?" said another.

"Why, to do harm, because others harmed him!"

"No! as for me, I can comprehend why he liked to save the flies, poor little '*moutard*!' " answered the man with the blue cap. "He thought, perhaps, 'Who knows that some one will not save me in the same way?'"

"The comrade is right," cried Pique-Vinagre; "he has read in his heart what I was about to explain to the honourable company.

"Gringalet was not malicious; he saw no farther than the end of his nose; but he said to himself, '*Coupe en Deux* is my spider; perhaps one day somebody will do for me what I do for the flies; they will break up his web, and snatch me from his claws.' For, until then, on no account would he have dared to run away from his master; he would have thought himself stone dead. Yet, one day, when neither he nor his tortoise had had any luck, and they had only earned two or three sous, *Coupe en Deux* began to whip the poor child so hard, so hard! that, *ma foi*, Gringalet could stand it no longer. Tired of being the butt and martyr of everybody, he watched the moment when the trap-door of the garret was open, and while *Coupe en Deux*

was feeding his beasts, he slipped down the ladder."

"Ah! so much the better!" said a prisoner. "But why did he not go and complain to the *doyen*?" said the blue cap; "he would have given *Coupe en Deux* his change."

"Yes, but he did not dare; he was so much afraid he preferred to run away. Unfortunately, *Coupe en Deux* had seen him; he caught him by the throat, and carried him back to the garret; this time, Gringalet, on thinking of what he had to expect, shuddered from head to foot, for he was not at the end of his troubles.

"Speaking of the troubles of Gringalet, it is necessary that I should speak to you of *Gargousse*, the favourite ape of *Coupe en Deux*. This wicked animal was, '*ma foi*,' larger than Gringalet: judge what a size for an ape! Now I am going to tell you why they did not lead him as a show through the streets, like the other beasts of the menagerie; it was because *Gargousse* was so wicked and so strong that, among all the children, there was only an Auvergnat of fourteen years, a resolute fellow, who, after having several times collared and fought with *Gargousse*, had succeeded in mastering him, and leading him by a chain; and even then, there were often battles between them, and bloody ones, too, I tell you.

"Tired of this, the little Auvergnat said one day, 'Well, well, I will revenge myself on you, scamp of an ape!' So one morning he set off with his beast, as usual; to decoy him, he bought a sheep's heart: while *Gargousse* was eating, he passed a cord through the end of his chain, and fastened it to a tree, and when he had the scoundrel of an ape once tied, he poured on him such a torrent of blows! a torrent that fire could not have extinguished."

"Ah! well done!"

"Bravo! the Auvergnat!"

"Hit hard, my boy!"

"Break his back for him, the rascally *Gargousse*," said the prisoners.

"And he did lay it on with a good heart," answered Pique-Vinagre. "You should have heard how *Gargousse* cried, seen how he gnashed his teeth, jumped, danced here and there; but the Auvergnat trimmed him up with his club, saying, 'Do you like it! here is some more!' Unfortunately, apes are like cats, they have nine lives. *Gargousse* was as cunning as he was wicked. When he saw, as I may say, what kind of wood was burning for him, at the very thickest moment of the torrents he cut a last caper, fell flat down at the foot of the tree, kicked a moment, and then shammed dead, not budging any more than a log. The Auvergnat wished nothing more: believing the ape done for, he cleared out, never to put his feet in *Coupe en Deux*'s abode again. But the vagabond of a *Gargousse* watched him out of the corner of his eye, all wounded as he was, and as soon as he saw himself alone, and the Auvergnat at a distance, he gnawed the cord with his teeth. The Boulevard Monceau, where he had had his dance, was very near *La Petite Pologne*; the ape knew his road as well as he did his *pater*; he slowly went off then, crawling along, and arrived at his master's, who swore and foamed to see his favourite ape thus served out. But this is not all; from that ma-

ment Gargousse had preserved such furious spite against all children in general, that Coupe en Deux, who was not very tender-hearted, had not dared to let any of them lead him, for fear of an accident; for Gargousse would have been capable of strangling or devouring a child; and the little fellows would rather have allowed themselves to be slashed by Coupe en Deux than approach the ape."

"I must most decidedly go and eat my soup," said the keeper, making a movement towards the door; "this devil of a Pique-Vinaigre would make the birds come down from the trees to hear him. I do not know where he has fished up this story."

"At length the keeper is off," whispered Le Squelette to the Gros-Boiteux; "I am in a sweat—I have a fever, so much do I burn within. Only attend to making the wall around the *mangeur*, I'll take care of the rest."

"Ah ça! be good boys," said the keeper, going towards the door.

"Good as images," answered Le Squelette, drawing near Germain, while the Gros-Boiteux and Nicolas, at a concerted signal, made two steps in the same direction.

"Ah! respectable keeper, you are going away at the finest moment," said Pique-Vinaigre, with an air of reproach.

Except for the Gros-Boiteux, who prevented his movement by seizing his arm, Le Squelette had sprung upon Pique-Vinaigre.

"How! at the finest moment?" answered the keeper, returning towards the *"conteur."*

"I think so," said Pique-Vinaigre; "you do not know all you are going to lose; the most charming part of my story is about to commence."

"Do not listen to it, then," said Le Squelette, with difficulty restraining his rage; "he is not in the vein to-day: as for me, I find his story abominably stupid."

"My story stupid?" cried Pique-Vinaigre, his vanity wounded; "well, keeper, I beg you, I supplicate you, to remain to the end. I have only enough to fill a good quarter of an hour; besides, your soup is cold. Now what do you risk? I will hasten on with my story, so that you may still have the time to go and eat before we go to our beds."

"Well, then, I remain, but make haste," said the keeper, drawing near.

"And you are right to remain, for, without boasting, you have never heard anything like it—above all, the conclusion; there is the triumph of the ape and of Gringalet, escorted by all the little beast conductors and inhabitants of La Petite Pologne. My word of honour, I do not say it from vanity, but it is superb."

"Then go on, my boy," said the keeper, coming close to the stove.

Le Squelette trembled with rage. He almost despaired of accomplishing his crime. Once the hour of repose arrived, Germain was saved; for he did not sleep in the same ward with his implacable enemy, and the next day, as we have said, he was to occupy one of the vacant cells *à la pistole*.

And, moreover, Le Squelette saw from the interruptions of several of the prisoners, that they found themselves, thanks to the story of Pique-Vinaigre, filled with ideas that softened

their hearts; perhaps, then, they would not assist, with savage indifference, the accomplishment of a frightful murder, of which their presence would make them accomplices.

Le Squelette could prevent the *"conteur"* from finishing his story, but then his last hope vanished of seeing the keeper retire before the hour in which Germain would be in safety.

"Ah! it is stupid, is it?" said Pique-Vinaigre. "Well! the honourable society shall be the judge."

"There was not then an animal more wicked than the large ape Gargousse, which was, above all, as savage as his master towards children. What did Coupe en Deux do to punish Gringalet for wishing to run away! That you shall know directly; in the mean time, he caught the child, shut him up in the garret, saying to him, 'To-morrow morning, when all your comrades are gone, I will take hold of you, and you shall see what I do to those who wish to run away from here.'

"I leave you to imagine what a horrible night Gringalet passed. He hardly closed his eyes; he asked himself what Coupe en Deux would do. At length he fell asleep. But what a sleep! then there was a dream, a frightful dream—that is to say, the beginning—you will see."

"He dreamed that he was one of those poor flies which he had so often saved from the spider's web, and that he, in his turn, fell into a large and strong web, where he struggled with all his strength without being able to escape; then he saw coming towards him, softly, cautiously, a kind of monster, which had the face of Coupe en Deux on a spider's body."

"My poor Gringalet began again to struggle, as you may imagine; but the more efforts he made the more he was entangled in the toils, just like the poor flies. At length the spider approached—touched him—and he felt the large, cold, and hairy paws of the monster encircle him. He thought himself dead: but suddenly he heard a kind of humming noise, clear and acute, and saw a little golden gnat which had a kind of sting as fine and brilliant as a diamond needle, flying round the spider in a furious manner, and a voice (when I say a voice, just imagine the voice of a gnat!) a voice said to him, 'Poor little fly; you have saved flies; the spider shall not—'

"Unfortunately, Gringalet awoke with a start, and he saw not the end of the dream; nevertheless, he was a little comforted, saying to himself, 'Perhaps the golden gnat with the diamond sting would have killed the spider, if I had seen the end of the dream.'

"But Gringalet had need of all this to console himself, for as the night advanced his fear returned so strongly that in the end he forgot his dream, or, rather, he only remembered the frightful part of it; the great web where he had been entangled, and the spider with the face of Coupe en Deux. You can judge what shiverings of alarm he must have had. Dame! judge then, alone—all alone—with no one to take his part!

"In the morning, when he saw the light appear little by little through the garret window, his alarm redoubled; the moment was drawing near when he would be left all alone with

Coupe en Deux. Then he threw himself on his knees in the middle of the garret, and weeping hot tears, he begged his companions to ask his pardon from Coupe en Deux; or to assist him to escape, if there was any way. Oh, yes! some from fear of the master, others from caring nothing about it, others from cruelty, refused the service which poor Gringalet demanded.

"Wicked scrubs!" said the prisoner in the blue cap; "they had neither body nor soul!"

"It is true," said another; "it is vexing to see this want of feeling."

"And alone, and without defence," resumed the prisoner in the blue cap; "for one who cannot stretch out his neck without wincing it is always a pity. When one has teeth to bite, then it is different. *Ma foi*, you have tusks! Well, show them, and look for tail, my cadet!"

"That is true!" said several of the prisoners.

"Ah, ça!" cried Le Squelette, no longer able to restrain his rage, and addressing the blue cap, "will you not be still, you? have I not already said, 'Silence in the *pègre*'? Am I, or am I not, the prevost here?"

For sole answer, the blue cap looked Squelette in the face, and then made a gesture, perfectly well known to the "*gamins*" of Paris, which consists in placing on the end of the nose the thumb of the right hand, opened, and touching with the little finger the thumb of the left, also spread out like a fan.

The blue cap accompanied this mute answer with an expression so grotesque that several of the prisoners shouted with laughter, while some of the others, on the contrary, remained stupefied at the audacity of the new prisoner.

Le Squelette shook his fist at blue cap, and said, grinding his teeth, "We'll settle this to-morrow."

"And I will make the addition on your 'hide.' I'll set down seventeen and carry naught."

For fear the keeper should find a new reason for remaining, in order to prevent a possible quarrel, Le Squelette answered calmly,

"That is not the question. I have the superintendence of the *chauffoir*, and I must be obeyed; is it not so, keeper?"

"It is true," said the officer. "Do not interrupt. And you, Pique-Vinaigre, go on; but make haste, my boy."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF GRINGALET AND OF GARGOUSSE.

"Then," resumed Pique-Vinaigre, continuing his story, "Gringalet, seeing himself abandoned, gave himself up to his unhappy fate. Broad daylight came, and all the children prepared to depart with their beasts. Coupe en Deux opened the trap and called the roll, in order to give each one his piece of bread; all descended the ladder, and Gringalet, more dead than alive, crouching in a corner of the garret, moved no more than it did; he saw his companions going off, one after the other; he would have given anything to do as they did. Finally, they were all gone. The heart of the poor child beat strongly; he hoped that, perhaps, his master would forget him. Ah, well, he heard Coupe en Deux, who was at the bottom of the ladder, cry in a harsh voice,

"Gringalet! Gringalet!"

"Here I am, master."

"Come down at once, or I'll fetch you," answered Coupe en Deux. Gringalet thought his last day was come.

"Allons," he said to himself, trembling in every limb, and remembering his dream, 'now you are in the toils, little fly; the spider is going to eat you.'

"After having placed his tortoise softly on the ground, he bade him adieu, for he had become attached to the creature, and approached the trap-door. He placed his foot on the ladder to descend, when Coupe en Deux, taking him by his poor little thin leg, as slender as a spindle, drew him so strongly, so harshly, that Gringalet tumbled down, and polished his face against the whole length of the ladder."

"What a pity that the *doyen* of La Petite Pologne had not been there—what a fine dance for Coupe en Deux," said the blue cap; "it is in such times as these that it is good to be strong."

"Yes, my boy; but, unfortunately, the *doyen* was not there! Coupe en Deux took the child by the seat of his trousers, and carried him into his den, where he kept his big ape tied to the foot of his bed. On seeing the child, the beast began to leap and grind his teeth like a mad thing, and to spring the whole length of his chain, as if he wished to devour him."

"Poor Gringalet, how did he get out of this?"

"But if he had fallen into the clutches of the ape, he would have been strangled at once."

"Thunder! it makes me half dead," said the blue cap: "as for me, at this moment, I could not harm a louse—and you, friends?"

"*Ma foi*, nor I either." "Nor I."

At this moment the clock struck three quarters past three.

Le Squelette, fearing more and more that time would be wanting, cried, furious at these interruptions, which seemed to indicate that several of the prisoners were becoming softened, "Silence in the *pègre*! He will never finish, this '*conteur*' of misfortune, if you talk as much as he does."

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When one reflects that Gringalet had had all the trouble in the world to become accustomed to his tortoise, and that the most courageous of his comrades trembled at the name alone of *Gargousse*, let him imagine his terror when he saw himself carried by his master near to this devil of an ape. 'Pardon, master,' he cried, his teeth chattering as if he had an ague—'pardon, master! I will never do it again, I promise you.'

"The poor little fellow cried, 'I will never do it again,' without knowing why he said so, for he had nothing to reproach himself with; but Coupe en Deux laughed at that. In spite of the cries of the child, who struggled hard, he placed him within reach of *Gargousse*, and the beast sprang upon him and clutched him."

A shudder passed through the audience, who were more and more attentive.

"How stupid I would have been to go away," said the keeper, approaching still nearer.

"And this is nothing yet; the finest has yet to come," answered Pique-Vinaigre. "As soon

as Gringalet felt the cold and hairy paws of the great ape, which seized him by the throat and by the head, he thought himself devoured, became as it were delirious, and began to cry with groans which would have softened a tiger.

"The spider of my dream, good Lord! the spider of my dream—little golden gnat, help, help!"

"Will you hush! will you hush?" said Coupe en Deux, giving him heavy kicks, for he was afraid that his cries would be heard; but at the end of a moment there was no more danger: poor Gringalet cried no more, struggled no more; on his knees, as white as a sheet, he shut his eyes and shivered as if it had been January. Meantime the ape beat him, pulled his hair, and scratched him; and from time to time, the wicked beast stopped to look at his master, absolutely as if they understood each other. As for Coupe en Deux, he laughed so loud! so loud! that if Gringalet had cried, the shouts of his master would have drowned his cries. It would seem as if this encouraged Gargousse, for he was more and more cruel to the child.

"Ah! '*greudin*' of an ape," cried the blue cap. "If I had held you by the tail, I would have spun you round like a mill—just like a sling, and I would have cracked your pate on the pavement."

"Rascally ape! he was as wicked as a man!"

"There are no men so wicked as that!"

"Not so wicked!" answered Pique-Vinagre.

"And Coupe en Deux! Judge of it—this is what he did afterward: he unfastened the chain (which was very long) from the bed, took the child, more dead than alive, from the paws of Gargousse, and fastened him at one end of it, with Gargousse at the other. There was an invention."

"It is true, there are men more cruel than the most cruel beasts."

"When Coupe en Deux had done this, he said to his ape, which appeared to understand him,

"Attention, Gargousse! they have led and shown you, now in your turn you shall show Gringalet; he shall be your ape. Come, hop, stand up, Gringalet, or I say to Gargousse, 'speak to him, fellow!'"

"The poor child had fallen on his knees, his hands clasped, but not able to speak; his teeth chattered in his head.

"Tiens! make him walk, Gargousse," said Coupe en Deux to his ape; 'and if he is cross, do as I do.'

"And at the same time he gave the child a torrent of blows with a switch, and afterward handed it to the ape.

"You know how these animals imitate by nature, but Gargousse in this respect excelled; so he took the rod in his hand and fell upon Gringalet, who was obliged to get up. Once on his legs, he was about the same size as the ape; then Coupe en Deux went out of his room and descended the staircase, calling Gargousse, and Gargousse followed him, driving Gringalet before him with blows from the rod.

"They reached thus the little court of the building of Coupe en Deux. There he counted on amusing himself; he shut the door leading into the lane, and signed to Gargousse to make

the child run before him around the court, by striking him with the switch.

"The ape obeyed, and began to chase Gringalet in this manner, while Coupe en Deux held his sides with laughter. You think that this wickedness was enough! Oh! yes, but it was nothing as yet. Up to this time Gringalet would have escaped with a few scratches, lashes, and horrible fear. Now this is what Coupe en Deux did:

"To make the ape furious against the child, who, panting and out of breath, was more dead than alive, he took Gringalet by the hair, pretended to belabour him with blows, and then he handed him back to Gargousse, crying, 'Speak to him, speak to him!' and then he showed him a piece of sheep's heart, as much as to say to him, 'This shall be your reward!'"

"Oh! then, my friends, truly it was a dreadful sight. I imagine a great red ape with a black snout, grinding his teeth like a madman, and throwing himself furiously on this poor little unfortunate, who, not being able to defend himself, had been thrown down at the first blow, and lay with his face to the ground, in order to protect it.

"Seeing this, Gargousse, his master setting him at the child continually, mounted on his back, took him by the neck, and fell to biting him, until he made the blood come.

"Oh! the spider of my dream—the spider!" cried Gringalet in a stifled voice, believing now that he was going to be killed. Suddenly there was a knock at the door, pan! pan! pan!"

"Ah! the *doyen*!" cried the prisoners with joy.

"Yes, this time it was he, my friends; he called through the door, 'Will you open, Coupe en Deux! will you open! Do not sham deaf; for I see you through the keyhole!'"

"Coupe en Deux, forced to reply, went grumbling to open the door for the *doyen*, who was a *gaillard* as solid as a bridge, in spite of his fifty years, and with whom it was worth no one's while to joke when he was angry.

"What do you want with me?" said Coupe en Deux to him, half opening the door.

"I want to speak to you," said the *doyen*, who entered almost by force into the little court; then, seeing the ape always savage after Gringalet, he ran, caught Gargousse by the nape of his neck, and tried to take the child away from under him; but he only then saw that the child was chained to the ape. Seeing this, the *doyen* looked at Coupe en Deux in a terrible manner, and cried, 'Come, then, at once, and unchain this poor unfortunate!'"

"You can judge of the joy and surprise of Gringalet, who, half dead with fright, found himself saved as it were by a miracle. Then he could not but think of the golden gnat of his dream, although the *doyen* did not look much like a gnat, the '*gaillard*.'"

"Allons," said the keeper, making a step towards the door; "now Gringalet is saved, I go to eat my soup."

"Saved!" cried Pique-Vinagre, "oh! yes, saved! he is not yet at the end of his troubles, poor Gringalet."

"Really!" said several of the prisoners, with interest. "But what is going to happen to him now?" asked the keeper, drawing near.

"Remain, and you shall know," answered the "content." "Devil of a Pique-Vinaigre, he does with one just as he pleases," said the keeper; "ma foi, I will remain a little longer." La Squelette, mute, foamed with rage.

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"Coupe en Deux, who feared the *doyen* as he did fire, had, grumbling, loosened the child from the chain; when that was done, the *doyen* threw Gargousse into the air, received him on the end of a most magnificent kick, and sent him sprawling ten feet. The ape cried like a burned child, gnashed his teeth, but he fled quickly, and went to take refuge on the top of a shed, where he shook his fist at the *doyen*.

"Why do you beat my ape?" said Coupe en Deux to the *doyen*.

"You ought rather to ask me, why I do not beat you, to cause this child such suffering! You are drunk pretty early this morning!"

"I am no more drunk than you are; I was teaching a trick to my ape; I wish to give a representation where he and Gringalet will appear together; I am following my business—why do you meddle with it?"

"I meddle with what concerns me. This morning, not seeing Gringalet pass before my door with the other children, I asked them where he was; they did not answer—they looked embarrassed. I know you. I thought you were after no good, and I was not wrong. Listen to me: every time I do not see Gringalet pass before my door with the others in the morning, I will be here at once, and you must show him to me, or—I'll knock you down."

"I will do as I please; I have no orders to receive from you," answered Coupe en Deux, irritated at this threat. "You shall not knock me down; and if you do not take yourself off from this, or if you return, I—"

"Flip-flap went the *doyen*, interrupting Coupe en Deux by a duet of blows enough to silence a rhinoceros: 'There is what you get for answering in this manner to the *doyen* of La Petite Pologne.'

"Two blows! it was too little," said the blue cap; "in the *doyen's* place, I should have given him a touch of *soupe grasse*."

"And he should not have had it too hastily," added a prisoner.

"The *doyen*," replied Pique-Vinaigre, "could have eaten ten like Coupe en Deux. So he was obliged to put these blows in his pocket; but he was none the less furious at being struck, and, above all, before Gringalet. Thus, at this very moment, he promised to avenge himself, and an idea occurred to him which could only have occurred to a demon of wickedness like himself. While he was ruminating on this diabolical idea, the *doyen* said,

"Remember, that if you attempt to injure this child again, I will force you to clear out from La Petite Pologne, you and your beasts; otherwise I will stir up the neighbourhood against you; you know they hate you here, so you will have a passport which your back will remember, I promise you."

"Traitor as he was, in order to be able to execute his wicked idea, instead of continuing to be angry against the *doyen*, Coupe-en-Deux cringed like a dog, and said,

"Faith of man! *doyen*, you were wrong to

strike me, and to think that I wished any harm to Gringalet; on the contrary, I repeat to you, that I was teaching a new trick to my ape; he is not sweet-tempered when he is angry, and if, in the scuffle, the little one was bitten, I am sorry for it."

"Hum?" said the *doyen*, looking at him from the corner of his eye, "is this really true that you tell me? If you wish to teach a trick to your ape, why did you fasten him to Gringalet?"

"Because Gringalet must also know it. This is what I wish to do: I will dress Gargousse in a red coat and a cap with feathers; I will seat Gringalet in a child's chair; then I will put a towel around his neck, and the ape, with a large wooden razor, will pretend to shave him."

"The *doyen* could not keep from laughing at this idea.

"Is it not a farce?" said Coupe en Deux, with a smirking look.

"In truth, it is a farce," said the *doyen*; "so much the more, as they say your ape is sufficiently cunning and knowing to play such a part."

"I think so. When he has seen me five or six times pretend to shave Gringalet, he will imitate me with his large wooden razor; but on that account, as the child must become used to him, I have tied them together."

"But why have you chosen Gringalet rather than any other?"

"Because he is the smallest of all, and, being seated, Gargousse will be larger than he is; besides, I intend to give half of the profits to Gringalet."

"If this is so," said the *doyen*, reassured by the hypocrisy of the owner of the beasts, "I regret the twist I gave you; consider it as an advance."

"While his master spoke with the *doyen*, Gringalet dared not breathe; he trembled like a leaf, and longed to throw himself at the feet of the *doyen* and beg to be taken away; but his courage failed, and he began again to despair, saying to himself, 'I shall be like the poor fly of my dream—the spider will devour me; I was wrong to believe that the golden gnat would save me!'

"Allons! my boy; since the Père Coupe en Deux gives you half of the money, that ought to encourage you to accustom yourself to the ape. Bah! bah! you will do it; and if the profits are large, you will have no cause to complain."

"He complain! Have you any reason to complain?" asked his master, giving him a side look so terrible that the child wished he was a hundred feet under ground.

"No, no, my master!" he stammered.

"You see, *doyen*," said Coupe en Deux, "he never has complained; I only wish for his welfare, after all. If Gargousse scratched him the first time, it shall not happen again, I promise you. I will watch."

"Very well! Thus every one will be content."

"Gringalet the most," said Coupe en Deux; "is it not so?"

"Yes, yes, master," said the trembling child.

"And to console you for your scratches, I will give you part of a good breakfast; for the *doyen* is going to send a plate of outlets and

pickles, four bottles of wine, and a gallon of brandy."

"At your service, Coupe en Deux: my cellar and my kitchen shine for the whole world."

"At heart, the doyen was a good man, but he was not very wise, and he loved to sell his wine, and his cutlets also. The rascal of a Coupe en Deux knew it well; you see that he sent him off contented at having sold some eatables and drinkables, and reassured as to the fate of Gringalet."

"So, now, here is the poor little fellow fallen again into the power of his master. The moment the doyen had turned on his heels, Coupe en Deux showed the staircase to his victim, and ordered him to mount at once to his garret; the child did not allow him to say it twice, but went, very much alarmed."

"Oh, Lord! I am lost," he cried, throwing himself upon the straw beside his tortoise, and weeping bitterly. He was there for a good hour, sobbing, when he heard the coarse voice of Coupe en Deux calling him. That which increased the fear of Gringalet was, that it seemed to him the voice of his master had a strange sound."

"Will you come down at once?" said the owner of the beast, with a horrid oath.

"The child quickly descended the stairs. Hardly had he put his foot on the ground, when his master seized him, and carried him to his chamber, staggering at each step, for Coupe en Deux had drunk so much—so much, that he was as tipsy as a sow, and could hardly keep his legs: his body swayed backward and forward, and he looked at Gringalet, rolling his eyes in a most ferocious manner, but without speaking. He had, as the saying is, his tongue too thick. Never had the child been more afraid of him."

"Gargousse was chained to the foot of the bed."

"In the middle of the room was a chair with a cord hanging on the back."

"Si—si—sit down there," continued Pique-Vinaigre, imitating, to the end of this story, the stammering of a drunken man, whenever he related what Coupe en Deux said.

"Gringalet seated himself trembling. Then Coupe en Deux, without saying a word, wound the cord around him, and tied him to the chair, and that not easily; for although the owner of the beasts could still see a little, and knew what he was about, you may imagine he made double knots. At length, Gringalet is firmly fastened in the chair. 'Mon bon Dieu! mon bon Dieu!' he murmured. 'This time no one will come to deliver me.'

"Poor little fellow! he was right; no one could—no one did come, as you will see. The doyen had gone, and Coupe en Deux had double locked the door of the court on the inside, and drawn the bolt: no one could come there to the aid of Gringalet."

"Oh! this time," said several of the prisoners, much interested in the story, "Gringalet, you are lost." "Poor little fellow!" "What a pity!" "If it only needed twenty sous to save him, I would give them." "I also." "Rascal of a Coupe en Deux! What is he going to do?"

Pique-Vinaigre continued:

"When Gringalet was tied to the chair his master said to him, 'Gredin,' it is you who has been the cause that—that I have been beaten by the doyen—you—are—go-o-o-ing to die!' And he drew from his pocket a large razor, newly sharpened, opened it, and took with one hand Gringalet by the hair."

A murmur of indignation and horror circulated among the prisoners, and interrupted for a moment Pique-Vinaigre, who resumed:

"At the sight of the razor the child began to cry, 'Pardon! master, pardon! do not kill me!' 'C-r-r-r-y, c-r-r-y, b-o-o-y—you will not cry long,' answered Coupe en Deux."

"Golden gnat! golden gnat! help!" cried poor Gringalet, almost delirious, recalling to his mind his dream; 'here is the spider that is going to kill me!'

"Ah! you call—me—a-a-a spider!" said Coupe en Deux; 'on account—o-o—that—and other things, you—are—go-o-o-ing to die—do you hear—r-r—but—not by my hand—because that—the thing—and, besides, they will guillotine me—e-e. I will say—and—prove—that it was—the—a-a-pe—I have prepared—but no matter!' said Coupe en Deux, hardly able to stand; then, calling his ape, which, at the end of his chain, ground his teeth, and looked alternately at his master and the child,

"Look here, Gargousse," he said, showing him the razor and Gringalet, whom he held by the hair, 'you must do so to him; do you see?'

"And passing the back of the razor several times over the throat of Gringalet, he pretended to cut it."

"The 'gucuse' of an ape was such a good imitator, so wicked, and so malicious, that he comprehended what his master wished; and, to prove it to him, shook his chin with the left paw, threw his head back, and pretended to cut his throat. 'That's it, Gargousse; that's it,' said Coupe en Deux, stammering, shutting his eyes, and reeling so much that he came near falling with Gringalet and the chair. 'Yes, that's it; I'll unfasten your chain—cut his whistle—that's it; hey, Gargousse!'

"The ape cried and chattered, as if to say yes, and put out his paw to take the razor, which Coupe en Deux held towards him."

"Golden gnat, help!" murmured Gringalet in a dying tone, certain now that his hour was come."

"For, alas! he called the golden gnat to his assistance, without any hope that he would come; but he said that as one says 'Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!' when is one drowning."

"Just at this moment, Gringalet saw come in at the window one of those small flies, green and gold, which are so common; one would have called it a spark of fire which flew, flew, and just at the moment when Coupe en Deux gave the razor to Gargousse, the golden gnat flew straight into the eye of this wicked brigand."

"A fly in the eye is no great thing; but, for a moment, it stings like a prick with a needle; thus Coupe en Deux, who could hardly stand, fell on the floor and rolled like a log to the foot of the bed where Gargousse was chained."

"Golden gnat, I thank you; you have saved me!" cried Gringalet; for, still seated, and tied on the chair, he had seen everything."

"It is true enough, the golden gnat prevented his throat from being cut," cried the prisoners, transported with joy.

"*Vive* the golden gnat!" cried the blue cap.

"Yes, long live the golden gnat!" repeated several voices.

"*Vive* Pique-Vinaigre and his stories!" said another.

"Stop, then," resumed the "*conteur*," "here's the finest and most terrible part of the history that I had promised you.

"Coupe en Deux had fallen on the ground like lead; he was so drunk that he stirred no more than a log; he was dead drunk, and knew nothing; but, in falling, he came near crushing Gargousse, and had almost broken one of his hind paws. You know how wicked this villainous beast was—rancorous and malicious. He held on to the razor which his master had given him to cut the throat of Gringalet. What does my '*gucuz*' of an ape when he sees his master stretched on his back, immovable as a fried carp, and much at his ease? He sprang upon him, crouched on his breast, with one of his paws stretched the skin of his throat, and with the other—'*crac*'—he cut his windpipe in a moment, exactly as Coupe en Deux had shown him how to operate on Gringalet."

"Bravo!" "Well done!" "Long live Gargousse!" "*Vive* the little golden gnat!" "*Vive* Gringalet!" "*Vive* Gargousse!" cried the prisoners with enthusiasm.

"Well, my friends!" cried Pique-Vinaigre, enchanted at the success of his story; "what you have just cried, all La Petite Pologne cried an hour later."

"How is that—how?"

"I told you that, to do this bloody deed quite at his ease, Coupe en Deux had locked his door on the inside. In the evening, the children returned, one after the other, with their beasts; the first knocked—no answer; at length, when they were all assembled, they knocked again—no reply; one of them went after the doyen, and told him that they had knocked, and that their master did not open the door. 'The "*gredin*" is as drunk as an Englishman,' said he. 'I sent him some wine just now; we must break open the door; these children cannot remain all night out of doors.'

"They break open the doors, they enter, they mount the stairs, they reach the chamber, and what do they see? Gargousse, chained and crouching on the body of his master, and playing with the razor; poor Gringalet, happily out of his reach, still seated, and tied on the chair, not daring to cast his eyes on the dead body, and looking at—guess what! The little golden fly, which, after having fluttered around the child, as if to felicitate him, had finally come and seated itself on his little hand.

"Gringalet related all to the doyen, and to the crowd who followed him; this appeared truly, as they said, an act of Providence; then the doyen said, 'A triumph to Gringalet; a triumph to Gargousse, who has killed this bad brigand of a Coupe en Deux. He cut others; it was his turn to be cut!'

"Yes, yes!" said the crowd, for the defunct was detested by everybody, 'a triumph for Gargousse! a triumph for Gringalet.'

"It was night; they lighted torches of straw, they tied Gargousse on a bench, which four boys carried on their shoulders; the '*gredin*' of an ape did not appear to dislike this, and assumed the airs of a conqueror, by showing his teeth to the crowd. After the ape came the doyen, carrying Gringalet in his arms: all the little boys, each with his beast, surrounded the doyen; one carried his fox, another his marmot, another his Indian hog; those who played on the hurdygurdy, played on the hurdygurdy; there were coalmen, chimneysweeps, with their bagpipes, who also played: it was a noise, a joy, a fête, which cannot be imagined! Behind the musicians came all the inhabitants of La Petite Pologne, men, women, and children; they all held in their hands torches of straw, and shouted like madmen, "*Vive* Gringalet! "*vive* Gargousse!" The *cortège* in this order marched round the house of Coupe en Deux. It was a droll spectacle; these old buildings and all these figures illuminated by the red light of the straw fires, which flickered, and sparkled, and blazed up! As to Gringalet, the first thing he did, once at liberty, was to place the little golden fly in a paper box; and he kept repeating, during his triumph, 'Little golden gnats, I have well done to hinder the spiders from eating you, for—'

The recital of Pique-Vinaigre was interrupted.

"Eh! Père Roussel," cried a voice from without, "come, then, and eat your soup; four o'clock will strike in ten minutes."

"*Ma foi*!" the story is about finished. I'll go."

"Thank you, my boy, you have amused me finely; you may be proud of it," said the keeper to Pique-Vinaigre, going towards the door. Then stopping, "*Ah, ça!*" he good boys!" he said to the prisoners, turning around.

"We are going to hear the end of the story," said Le Squelette, almost bursting with restrained rage. Then he whispered to the Gros-Boiteux, "Go to the door, look after the keeper, and, when you have seen him go out of the court, cry 'Gargousse!' and the '*mangrue*' is dead."

"Just so," said the Gros-Boiteux, who accompanied the keeper, and remained standing near the door watching him.

"I told you, then," said Pique-Vinaigre, "that Gringalet, all the time of his triumph, said to himself, 'Little gnats, I have—'

"Gargousse!" cried the Gros-Boiteux.

"Mine! Gringalet. I will be your spider!" shouted Le Squelette, throwing himself on Germain so that he could neither make a movement nor utter a cry. His voice died under the formidable grasp of the long iron fingers of Le Squelette.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

"If you are the spider, I will be the golden gnat, Squelette of evil!" cried a voice, at the moment when Germain, surprised by the violent and sudden attack of his implacable enemy, fell backward on his bench, at the mercy of the brigand, who, with one knee on his breast, held him by the throat. "Yes, I will be the gnat, and, what is more, a famous gnat!" repeated the man in the blue cap, of whom we

have spoken; then, with a furious bound, overturning three or four prisoners who separated him from Germain, he sprang upon Le Squelette, and struck on his head and between the eyes such a torrent of blows with his fists that the sound was like that of a hammer upon an anvil.

The man in the blue cap, who was no other than the Chourineur, added, as he redoubled the rapidity of his hammering on the head of Le Squelette,

"It is the hail-storm of fist-cuffs which M. Rodolphe planted on my skull. I have learned the trick."

At this unexpected assault, the prisoners were struck with surprise, taking no part for or against the Chourineur. Many of them, still under the salutary impression of the story of Pique-Vinaigre, were even satisfied at this incident, which might save Germain.

Le Squelette, at first stunned, staggering like an ox under the butcher's axe, extended his hands mechanically to ward off the blows of his enemy. Germain was enabled to disengage himself from the mortal gripe, and half arose.

"But what is all this? who is this brigand?" cried the Gros-Boiteux; and springing upon the Chourineur, he tried to seize his arms from behind, while the latter endeavoured to hold down Le Squelette on the bench.

The defender of Germain answered the attack of the Gros-Boiteux by a kind of kick, so violent, that he sent him rolling to the extremity of the circle formed by the prisoners.

Germain, of a livid paleness, half suffocated, kneeling beside the bench, did not appear to have any consciousness of what was passing around him. The strangulation had been so violent and so painful that he hardly breathed.

After he had recovered a little, Le Squelette, by a desperate effort, succeeded in shaking off the Chourineur, and getting upon his feet. Panting, drunk with rage and hatred, he was frightful. His cadaverous face streamed with blood, his upper lip, drawn back like a mad wolf's, displayed his teeth closely set against each other.

At length he cried, in a voice breathless with anger and fatigue, for his struggle with the Chourineur had been violent, "Cut him down, then, this brigand, cowards! who let me be attacked traitorously, or the *mangeur* will escape."

During this kind of truce, the Chourineur, raising up the half-fainting Germain, had skillfully manoeuvred to approach by degrees an angle of the wall, where he placed his *protégé*.

Profiting by this excellent position of defence, the Chourineur could then, without fear of being attacked from behind, hold out a long time against the prisoners, on whom the courage and Herculean strength which he had just displayed made a powerful impression.

Pique-Vinaigre, alarmed, had disappeared during the tumult, without any one remarking his absence.

Seeing the hesitation of the greater part of the prisoners, Le Squelette said, "Come on, then! let us do the job for both of them, the large man and the little *mangeur*."

"Take care!" answered the Chourineur, preparing for the combat; "look out for yourself, Le Squelette! If you wish to play Coupe

en Deux, I will play Gargousse—I'll cut your throat."

"Why don't you jump on him!" cried the Gros-Boiteux. "Why does this madman defend the *mangeur*? Death to the *mangeur*, and him also! If he defends Germain, he is a traitor."

"Yes! yes!"

"Death to the *mangeur*!"

"Death!"

"Yes; death to the traitor who defends him!"

Such were the cries of several of the prisoners. A part of them, more merciful, cried, "Not before he speaks!"

"Yes; let him explain!"

"A man must not be killed without a hearing!"

"And without defence!"

"One would be a real Coupe en Deux!"

"So much the better!" answered the Gros-Boiteux and the partisans of Le Squelette.

"One cannot do too much to a *mangeur*!"

"To death with him!"

"Fall upon him!"

"Let us support Le Squelette!"

"Yes, yes! *charivari* for the blue bonnet!"

"No; let us sustain the blue cap! *charivari* for Le Squelette!" answered the party of the Chourineur.

"No; down with the blue cap!"

"Down with Le Squelette!"

"Bravo, my lads!" cried the Chourineur, addressing those of the prisoners who ranged themselves on his side; "you have hearts; you would not see a man murdered who is half dead; only cowards are capable of such conduct. Le Squelette is no bad joker; he is condemned in advance; that is the reason why he urges you on. But if you aid him to kill Germain, you will be roughly treated. Besides, I have a proposition to make. Le Squelette wants to finish this young man. Well! let him come and take him, if he will: it will be an affair between ourselves; we will walk into each other, and you will see; but he dares not—he is like Coupe en Deux, strong among the weak."

The vigour, the energy, the hardy figure of the Chourineur had a powerful effect on the prisoners; a considerable number ranged themselves on his side, and surrounded Germain; the party of Le Squelette were grouped around this bandit.

A bloody affray was about to take place, when the quick and measured step of a guard of infantry was heard in the court.

Pique-Vinaigre, profiting by the noise and general commotion, had gained the court and knocked at the wicket, in order to inform the keepers of what was going on in the "*chauffoir*."

The arrival of the soldiers put an end to this scene. Germain, Le Squelette, and the Chourineur were conducted to the presence of the director; the first to lodge his complaint, the others to answer the charge of a fight in the prison.

The alarm and sufferings of Germain were so intense, his weakness was so great, that he was obliged to lean on two of the keepers to reach the director's room. There he became quite faint; his excoarated throat bore the livid and bloody marks of the iron fingers of Le Squelette. A few seconds more, and the betrothed of Rigollette would have been strangled.

The keeper charged with the surveillance of

the pastor, who, as we have said, was much interested for Germain, gave him every assistance.

When he came to himself, when reflection succeeded to the rapid and terrible emotions that had hardly left him the exercise of his reason, his first thought was for his deliverer.

"Thank you for your attentions, monsieur," he said to the keeper; "but for that courageous man, I was lost."

"How are you now?"

"Better. Ah! all that has passed seems to me like a horrid dream!"

"Recover yourself."

"And he who saved me, where is he?"

"In the director's room. He is telling him how the affray occurred. It appears that without him—"

"I had been murdered, monsieur. Oh! tell me his name—who is he?"

"His name I do not know; he is nicknamed the Chourineur; he was once in the galleries."

"And the crime which brought him here, perhaps, is not serious?"

"Very serious—burglary," said the keeper. "He will probably have the same dose as Pique-Vinagre; fifteen or twenty years of hard labour and the pillory, as he is a second comer."

Germain shuddered; he would have preferred to be bound by the ties of gratitude to one less criminal.

"Ah! it is frightful," he said; "and yet this man, without knowing me, took my part. So much courage, so much generosity."

"What would you have, monsieur! Sometimes there is some good left in these people. The most important part is, that you are saved; to-morrow you will have your cell 'à la pistole,' and for this night you will sleep in the infirmary, according to the orders of the director. Come, courage, monsieur! The worst is over; when your pretty little visitor comes to see you, you can reassure her, for, once in your cell, you will have nothing more to fear." "Oh! no, I will not speak to her about it; but I wish to thank my defender. However culpable he may be in the eyes of the law, he has none the less saved my life."

"Hold! I hear him leaving the director's room. Le Squelette is now to be examined; I will take them back together, directly, Le Squelette to the dungeon, and the Chourineur to the *Fosse aux Lions*. He will, besides, be a little recompensed for what he has done for you; for as he is a bold and determined fellow, such as one should be to lead others, it is probable that he will take the place of Le Squelette as pre-vost."

The Chourineur having crossed a little lobby, on which opened the room of the director, entered the apartment where Germain was seated.

"Wait for me here," said the keeper to the Chourineur; "I am going to know what the director decides to do with Le Squelette, and I will return directly for you. There is our young man quite recovered; he wishes to thank you, and he has reason to, for without you all had been finished for him." The keeper retired. The features of the Chourineur were radiant with delight. He advanced joyfully, saying,

"Thunder! how happy I am at saving you!" And he extended his hand to Germain.

He, from a feeling of involuntary repulsion, at first drew back slightly instead of taking the hand offered by the Chourineur; then, recollecting that, after all, he owed his life to this man, he wished to make amends for this first movement of repugnance.

But the Chourineur had perceived it; a gloom spread over his face, and drawing back in his turn, he said, with much bitterness,

"Ah! it is right. Pardon me, monsieur."

"No, it is I who should ask your pardon. Am I not a prisoner like you? I should only think of the service you have rendered me; you have saved my life. Your hand, monsieur, I entreat you. I pray you, your hand."

"Thank you; now it is useless. The first movement is everything. If you had at first given me your hand, that would have given me pleasure; but, on reflection, it is I who do not wish it. Not because I am a prisoner, like you, but," he added, in a hesitating and gloomy manner, "because, before I was here, I was—"

"The keeper has told me all," replied Germain, interrupting him; "but you have none the less saved my life."

"I have done but my duty and pleasure, for I know who you are, Monsieur Germain."

"You know me?"

"A little, my nephew; I answer you as if I were your uncle!" said the Chourineur, resuming his tone of habitual carelessness; "and you would be very wrong to place my arrival at 'La Force' on the back of chance. If I had not known you, I should not have been here."

Germain looked at the Chourineur with the utmost surprise.

"How! it is because you have known me—"

"That I am here—a prisoner in 'La Force.'"

"I wish to believe you; but—"

"But you do not believe me."

"I wish to say, that it is impossible for me to comprehend how it can be that I have anything to do with your imprisonment."

"Have anything to do! You have everything."

"I have this misfortune?"

"A misfortune! on the contrary, it is I who am indebted to you; and very much, that is more."

"To me—you indebted to me?"

"Yes, for having procured me the advantage of making a tour in 'La Force.'"

"Truly," said Germain, passing his hand over his face, "I do not know whether the terrible shock I received has impaired my reason, but it is impossible for me to understand you. The keeper has just told me that you were accused of—of—"

And Germain hesitated.

"Of robbery, *pardieu!* yes, burglary; and at night, into the bargain! everything under full sail," cried the Chourineur, shouting with laughter. "Nothing was wanting—my robbery had '*toutes les herbes de la Saint Jean*,'* as the saying is."

Germain, painfully affected by the audacious boldness of the Chourineur, could not prevent himself from saying, "How, you, you so brave, so generous, do you talk thus! Do you not know the terrible punishment that awaits you!"

* This proverb cannot be rendered: it means that every exertion was made to have the robbery take place.

"Twenty years in the galleys, and the pillory! I am a headstrong scoundrel, heu! to take it so coolly! But what would you have when one is in for it! And yet to say that it is you, Monsieur Germain," added the Chourineur, uttering a heavy sigh, in a manner jokingly contrite, "you who are the cause of my misfortune?"

"When you explain yourself more clearly, I shall understand you. Joke as much as you please, my gratitude for the service you have rendered me will be none the less," said Germain, sadly.

"I ask your pardon, Monsieur Germain," answered the Chourineur, becoming more serious; "you do not like to see me laugh at this; let us speak no more about it. I must have a little explanation with you, and force you, perhaps, once more to offer me your hand."

"I do not doubt it; for, notwithstanding the crime of which you are accused, and of which you accuse yourself, everything in you announces courage and frankness. I am sure you are unjustly suspected; appearances, perhaps, compromise you."

"Oh! as to that, you are wrong, Monsieur Germain," said the Chourineur, so seriously this time, and with such an accent of sincerity, that Germain was forced to believe him. "As true as that I have a protector" (the Chourineur took off his cap), "who is for me what the 'bon Dieu' is for the good priests, I robbed at night, by breaking into a window; I was caught in the fact, and secured, with the stolen goods in my possession."

"But want, hunger, drove you, then, to this extremity?"

"Hunger! I had one hundred and twenty francs when they arrested me—the change of a note of a thousand francs, without counting that the protector of whom I have spoken, who does not know that I am here, will never let me want anything. But since I have spoken to you of my protector, you ought to believe that I am speaking the truth, because, you see, it is like going down on your knees. Thus, the torrent of blows that I rained down on Le Squelette is a fashion of his, which I copied after nature. The idea of the robbery—it is on account of him it came into my head. In fine, if you are here instead of being strangled by Le Squelette, thanks to him."

"But this protector?"

"Is also yours."

"Mine?"

"Yes! Monsieur Rodolphe protects you. When I say monsieur, it is monseigneur that I ought to say, for he is at least a prince; but I am accustomed to call him M. Rodolphe, and he allows it."

"You mistake," said Germain, more and more surprised; "I do not know the prince."

"Yes, but he knows you; you do not doubt it! It is possible—it is his way. He knows that there is a good man in trouble—'*crac*,' the good man is relieved; and he, nor seen nor known. I perplex you; for him happiness falls from the clouds, like a tile on the head. Thus, patience! some day or other you will receive your tile."

"Truly, what you say confounds me."

"You will have a good deal more of the

same! To return to my protector: some time since, after a service which he pretended I had rendered him, he procured me a superb position; I have no need to tell you what—it would be too long; in a word, he sent me to Marseilles, to embark for my 'superb position.' I left Paris, contented as a beggar! good! but soon that changed. A supposition: let us say that I left on a fine sunny day; well! the next day is cloudy; the day after very cloudy, and every succeeding day more and more so, until, at length, it became as black as the devil. Do you comprehend?"

"Not exactly."

"Well, let us see. Have you had a dog?"

"What a singular question." "Have you had a dog that loved you well and that was lost?"

"No."

"Then I will tell you at once, that when at a distance from M. Rodolphe, I was restless, uneasy, alarmed, like a dog that had lost his master. It was brutish, but the dogs also are brutes, and this does not prevent them from being attached to their masters, and remembering quite as much the good mouthfuls as the kickings they are accustomed to receive; and M. Rodolphe had given me better than good mouthfuls, for, do you see, for me M. Rodolphe is all in all. From a wicked, brutal, savage, and riotous rascal, he has made me a kind of honest man, by saying only two words to me; but these words, '*voyez vous*,' were like magic."

"And those words, what are they? What did he say to you?"

"He told me that I had still a heart and honour, although I had been to the galleys—not for having robbed, it is true. Oh! that, never, but for what is worse, perhaps—for having killed. Yes," said the Chourineur, in a sad tone, "yes, killed in a moment of anger, because from my childhood, brought up like a brute, without father or mother, abandoned in the streets of Paris, I knew neither God nor the devil, nor good nor evil, nor strong nor weak. Sometimes the blood rushed to my eyes, I saw red, and if I had a knife in my hand, I stabbed—I stabbed. I was like a real wolf; what! I could not frequent any other places than those where I met beggars and bandits; I did not put a crape on my hat for that. I was obliged to live in the mire; I did not even know I was there. But, when M. Rodolphe told me that since, in spite of the contempt of the world and misery, instead of stealing, as others did, I had preferred to work as much as I could, and at what I could, that showed I still had a heart and honour. Thunder! do you see, these two words had the same effect upon me as if some one had caught me by the hair and raised me a thousand feet in the air above the beggars with whom I lived, and showed me in what mire I wallowed. Then, of course, I said, 'Thank you, I have enough.' Then my heart beat with something besides anger, and I swore to myself always to keep this honour of which M. Rodolphe had spoken. You see, Monsieur Germain, by telling me with kindness that I was not as bad as I thought, M. Rodolphe encouraged me, and, thanks to him, I have become better than I was."

On hearing this language, Germain comprehended, still less how the Chourineur could have committed the robbery of which he accused himself.

CHAPTER XXX.

DELIVERANCE.

"No," thought Germain, "it is impossible; this man, who suffers himself to be thus carried away by the simple words honour and heart, cannot have committed this robbery of which he speaks with so much '*nonchalance*!'"

The Chourineur continued, without remarking the astonishment of Germain:

"Finally, the reason why I am to M. Rodolphe like a dog to his master, is that he has raised me in my own estimation. Before I knew him, I was only sensible to the touch; but he, he made me feel within, and deep down, I tell you. Once separated from him and the place where he dwelt, I found myself like a body without a soul. As I travelled on, I said to myself, 'He leads such a droll life! he mingles with such great scoundrels (I know something about it) that he will risk his bones twenty times a day,' and it is under these circumstances that I could play the dog for him and defend my master; for I have good teeth. But, on the other hand, he had told me, 'You must, *mon garçon*, make yourself useful to others; go, then, where you may be of some good.' I had a great desire to answer him, 'For me, there is no one to serve but you, Monsieur Rodolphe.' But I did not dare. He told me, 'Go.' I went; and I have obeyed him as well as I was able. But, thunder! when the time came to get into the tub, leave France, and place the sea between Monsieur Rodolphe and me, without the hope of ever seeing him again, in truth, I had not the courage. He told his correspondent to give me a heap of money as tall as I am when I should embark. I went to see the gentleman. I told him, 'It is impossible just now; I prefer the solid ground. Give me enough to get back to Paris on foot. I have good legs. I cannot embark. Monsieur Rodolphe shall say what he pleases; he will be angry; he will not see me any more. Possibly I shall see him; I shall be where he is; and if he continues the life he leads, sooner or later, I shall arrive in time, perhaps, to put myself between a knife and him. And, besides, I cannot go so far away from him.' At length they gave me enough for my journey. I arrived at Paris. I do not fear trifles; but once back, fear seized me. What could I say to M. Rodolphe to excuse myself for having returned without his permission? Bah! after all, he will not eat me. What shall be, shall be. I go to find his friend, a great, fat, bald man—another trump, this one. Thunder! when M. Murph came in, I said, 'My fate will be decided.' I felt my throat dry—my heart beat a tattoo. I expected to be scolded soundly. Well, yes! the worthy man received me as if he had left me the evening previous. He told me that M. Rodolphe, far from being angry, wished to see me at once. In short, he took me to my protector. Thunder! when I found myself again face to face with him—him who has such an open hand and so good a heart—who is terrible as a lion and gentle as a child—who is a prince, and who has worn a blouse like me—to have the opportunity (which I bless) of dealing out some fisticuffs to me. Faith, Monsieur Germain, on thinking of all these fascinations which he possesses, I felt myself done up. I wept like a doe. Well! instead of laughing—for imagine my scene when I weep—M. Rodolphe said to me, seriously,

"So you are back again, my good fellow?"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe; pardon if I am wrong, but I could not go. Make me a little nest in a corner of your court, give me my food, or let me earn it here; that is all I ask from you; and, above all, do not be angry because I have returned."

"I am so far from that, my good friend, that you have returned just in time to render me a service."

"I, Monsieur Rodolphe? Can it be possible! Well, do you see, it must be, as you told me, that there is something *above*; otherwise, how explain that I arrive here just at the moment when you have need of me? and what is it, then, I can do for you, Monsieur Rodolphe—jump from the top of the towers of Notre Dame?"

"Less than that, my man. An honest and excellent young man, for whom I am as much interested as if he were my son, is unjustly accused of robbery, and confined in *La Force*; he is called Germain, and is of a mild and gentle disposition; the scoundrels with whom he is imprisoned have taken an aversion to him; he may be in great danger; you, who have unfortunately the experience of a prison life, and know a great number of prisoners, could you not, in case some of your old comrades should be at *La Force*, could you not go and see them, and, by promises of money which shall be faithfully kept, engage them to protect this unhappy young man?"

"But who, then, is this generous and unknown man, who takes so much interest in my fate?" said Germain, more and more surprised.

"You will know, perhaps; as for me, I am ignorant. To return to my conversation with M. Rodolphe: while he was talking, an idea struck me, but an idea so farcical, that I could not keep from laughing before him."

"What is the matter?" said he.

"Dame! Monsieur Rodolphe, I laugh because I am content, and I am content because I have the means of placing your M. Germain out of all dangers, by giving him a protector who will defend him bravely; for, once the young man is under the wing of the fellow of whom I speak, there is not one of them will dare to come and look under his nose."

"Very well, my friend; it is doubtless one of your old companions?"

"Exactly, M. Rodolphe; he entered *La Force* some days ago; I learned this on my arrival; but we must have some money." "How much?"

"A thousand francs." "Here they are."

"Thank you, Monsieur Rodolphe; in two days you shall hear from me; your servant, messieurs. Thunder! the king was not my master; I could render a service to M. Rodolphe by joining you: it was that which was famous."

"I begin to understand, or rather, *mon Dieu*, I tremble to understand," cried Germain; "such fidelity cannot be possible! to come to protect me, defend me in this prison, you have, perhaps, committed a robbery? oh! this would be the sorrow of my whole life." "A moment: M. Rodolphe had told me that I had a heart and honour; these words are my law, do you see; and he can tell me so yet; for if I am no better than formerly, at least I am no worse."

"But this robbery? this robbery? If you have not committed it, how are you here?"

"Stop a moment. Here is the farce: with my thousand francs I went and bought a black

rug; I shaved off my whiskers; I put on blue spectacles; I stuck a pillow in my back, and made up a hump. I began at once to look for one or two rooms on a ground floor in a retired street. I found my affair in the Rue du Provence; I paid my rent in advance under the name of M. Grégoire. The next day I went to the Temple to buy furniture for my two rooms, always wearing my black wig, my hump, and my blue spectacles, so that I might be well known. I sent the things to the Rue du Provence, and six silver spoons and forks which I bought on the Boulevard Saint Denis, still in my disguise as a hunchback.

"I returned to put all in order in my domicile. I said to the porter that I should not sleep there for two days, and I carried away my key. The windows of the two rooms were fastened by strong shutters. Before I went away, I left one unfastened on the inside. At night I took off my wig, my spectacles, and my hump, with which I had been to make my purchases and hire my rooms. I put this disguise in a trunk, which I sent to the address of M. Murph, the friend of M. Rodolphe, begging him to take care of it. I bought this blouse and blue cap, and an iron bar, and at one o'clock in the morning I came to the Rue du Provence to hang about my lodgings, waiting until the patrol should pass, to commence my robbery, my burglary, in order to be taken up."

And the Chourineur was unable to suppress a hearty fit of laughter.

"Ah! I comprehend," cried Germain.

"But you will see if I had not ill luck: no patrol passed. I could have robbed myself twenty times at my ease. At length, about two o'clock, I heard the land-crabs at the end of the street; I opened my window, and broke two or three panes of glass to make a devil of a noise; I dashed in the window, jumped into the room, and seized the box of silver and some clothes. Happily, the patrol had heard the jingling of the glass just as I got out of the window. I was nabbed by the guard, who, at the noise of breaking glass, had come to see what was the matter.

"They knocked at the door; the porter opened it; they sent for the commissary; he came; the porter said that the rooms had been fixed the evening previous by a gentleman with a hunchback, with black hair and blue spectacles, and who was named Grégoire. I had the flaxen mane which you see; I had my eyes open like a hare in her form; I was straight as a Russian at the command, 'carry arms!' They could not then take me for the hunchback, with blue spectacles and black locks. I confessed everything; I was arrested; they took me to the dépôt—from the dépôt here; and I arrived at a good moment, just in time to snatch from the claws of the Squelette the young man of whom M. Rodolphe had said, 'I am as much interested for him as for my own son.' "Ah! monsieur, what do I not owe you for such services!" cried Germain.

"It is not to me—it is to M. Rodolphe you owe it."

"But the cause of his interest for me?"

"He will tell you, unless he does not choose to do so; for often he is pleased to do good, and if you take it into your head to ask him why, he will not mind answering, 'Attend to what concerns you.'"

"And does M. Rodolphe know that you are here?"

"Not so stupid as to tell him my idea; he

would not, perhaps, have allowed me this farce—and, without bragging, he! it is famous!"

"But the risks you have run, and still run?"

"What did I risk? not to be conducted to *La Force*, where you were, that is true. But I counted on the protection of M. Rodolphe, to have my prison changed and join you; a lord like him can do everything. And when I was once shut up, he would have wished me to be of service to you."

"But when your trial comes on?"

"Well! I will beg M. Murph to send me my trunk; I will put on before my judge the black wig, the blue spectacles, and the hump, and I will become M. Grégoire again, send for the porter who hired me the chamber, and for the shopkeepers who sold me the furniture; so much for the robbed. If they wish to see the robber again, I will throw off my disguise, and it will be as clear as day that the robbed and the robber make the sum total of the Chourineur, neither more nor less. Then, what the devil would you have them do to me, when it shall be proved that I have robbed myself?"

"That's true!" said Germain, more assured; "but since you felt so much interest for me, why did you not speak to me on entering the prison?"

"I knew at once the plot which was formed against you; I could have exposed it before Pique-Vinaigre had commenced his story; but to denounce even such bandits does not go down with me. I preferred to depend upon my fists to drag you from the paws of *Le Squelette*. And, besides, when I saw this brigand, I said to myself, 'Here is a fine occasion to practice the hail-storm of fisticuffs, after the manner of M. Rodolphe, to which I am indebted for the honour of his acquaintance.'"

"But if all the prisoners had taken part against you, what could you have done?"

"Then I should have screamed like an eagle, and called for help! But it suited me to do my own cooking myself; to be able to say to M. Rodolphe, 'No one but I meddled in the affair. I have defended, and I will defend, your young man, the tranquil!'"

At this moment the keeper entered quickly.

"Monsieur Germain, come, make haste, to the director's room. He wishes to speak to you at once. And you, Chourineur, my boy, descend to the *Fosse aux Lions*. You shall be pre-vost, if it suits you, for you have every requisite to fill the office, and the prisoners will not joke with a '*gaillard*' of your calibre."

"All the same to me—as well be captain as soldier while one is here."

"Will you still refuse my hand?" said Germain, cordially, to the Chourineur.

"*Ma foi!*" no, Monsieur Germain, '*ma foi!*' no; I believe that now I can allow myself this pleasure, and I do it with all my heart."

"We shall see each other again, for I am now under your protection. I shall have nothing more to fear, and from my cell I shall descend each day to the court."

"Be assured, if I wish it, they shall not speak to you except on all fours. But, now I think of it, you know how to write; put down on paper what I have just related to you, and send it to M. Rodolphe; he will know that he need have no more uneasiness about you, and that I am here for a good motive; for if he should learn elsewhere that the Chourineur had stolen, and he did not know the game—thunder! that would not suit me."

"Rest satisfied: this very night I will write to my unknown protector; to-morrow you will give me his address, and the letter shall be sent. Adieu once more; thank you, my good fellow."

"Adieu, Monsieur Germain; I go to return among this band of rascals, of whom I am provost; they will have to march pretty straight, or stand from under!"

"When I think that on my account you go to live for some time among these wretches—"

"What is that to me, now that there is no risk of their contaminating me? M. Rodolphe has washed me too well. I am insured against fire!"

And the Chourineur followed the keeper.

Germain entered the apartment of the director. What was his surprise—he found Rigolette there.

Rigolette, pale, in deep emotion, her eyes bathed in tears, and yet smiling through these tears, her face expressed a sentiment of joy, of happiness indescribable.

"I have good news to tell you, monsieur," said the director. "The judges have just declared that no action lies against you, and I have the order to set you immediately at liberty."

"Monsieur, what do you say? Can it be possible?"

Rigolette wished to speak; her too lively emotion prevented her; she could only make to Germain an affirmative sign with her head.

"Mademoiselle arrived here a few moments after I received the order to set you at liberty," added the director. "A letter of all-powerful recommendation which she brought me, has informed me of the touching devotion she has shown you during your stay in prison, monsieur. It is, then, with lively pleasure that I have sent for you, certain that you would be very happy to give your arm to mademoiselle on leaving this place."

"A dream! surely it is a dream!" said Germain. "Ah, monsieur, what kindness! Pardon me if surprise—joy—prevents me from thanking you as I ought."

"And I, too, Monsieur Germain, I cannot find a word to say," added Rigolette. "Judge of my happiness: on leaving you, I found the friend of M. Rodolphe waiting for me."

"M. Rodolphe again!" said the astonished Germain.

"Yes; now I can tell you all. M. Murph said to me then, 'Germain is free; here is a letter for the director of the prison; before you arrive, he will have received the order to set Germain at liberty, and you can bring him away.' I could not believe what I heard, and yet it was true. Quick—quick—I took a hack—I arrived—and it is now below waiting for us."

We renounce the attempt to describe the delights of the two lovers when they left *La Force*; of the evening they passed in the little chamber of Rigolette, which Germain left at eleven o'clock for a modest furnished apartment.

Let us sum up in a few words the practical or theoretical ideas we have endeavoured to place in relief in this episode of a prison life.

We shall esteem ourselves very happy if we have shown,

The insufficiency, the impotency, and the danger of imprisonment in common.

The disproportion which exists between the appreciation and punishment of certain crimes, and those of certain offences.

And, finally, the material impossibility for poorer classes to enjoy the benefits of the civil laws.

PART VIII.

CHAPTER I.

PUNISHMENT.

We will conduct the reader again to the office of the notary, Jacques Ferrand.

Thanks to the habitual loquacity of the clerks, almost constantly occupied with the increasing caprices of their patron, we shall thus expose the events that occurred since the disappearance of Cécily.

"One hundred sous against ten, if the present state of his health continues; before a month the patron will be as dead as a musket!"

"The fact is, that since the servant who had the air of an Alsatian has left the house, he has nothing but skin on his bones."

"And what kind of skin!"

"Ah, ça," he was then in love with this Alsatian, for it is since her departure that he has shrivelled up so!"

"He, the patron, in love! what nonsense! on the contrary, he sees the priests more than ever; and the 'curé' of the parish, a very respectable man (one must be just), went away yesterday, saying (I overheard him) to another priest who accompanied him, 'This is admirable! M. Ferrand is the *beau idéal* of charity and generosity.' 'The 'curé' said that! all alone! without effort!'"

"What!" "That the patron was the *beau idéal* of charity and generosity!"

"Yes! I heard him."

"Then I can't understand it at all. The curé has the reputation, and he deserves it, of being what is called a right good pastor."

"It is true; and of him we must speak seriously and with respect; he is as good and charitable as the 'Little Blue Mantle,'* and when one says that of a man, he is judged."

"Ay, that is not a little to say."

"No. For the Little Blue Mantle, as well as for the good priest, the poor have only one voice, and a good voice it is, from the heart."

"Then I return to my idea; when the 'curé' affirms a thing, he must be believed, as he is incapable of telling a falsehood; and yet to think as he does, that the patron is charitable and generous—that sticks in my throat."

"Oh! how pretty that is, Châlamel! how pretty!" "Seriously, I would just as soon believe that as I would a miracle. It would not be more difficult." "M. Ferrand generous! he who would skin an egg!" "And yet, messieurs, the forty sous for our breakfast!" "Beautiful proof! It is like a pimple on the end of a man's nose—it is an accident."

"Yes, but, on the other hand, the head clerk told me that three days ago he sold out an enormous amount of treasury bonds, and that—"

"Well! Speak then." "It is a secret."

"So much the more reason for telling it."

"Your word and honour that you won't mention it!"

* M. Champlain, a philanthropist of Paris.

"On the heads of our children we give it."

"And besides, messieurs, let us remember what the great king Louis XIV. majestically said to the Doge of Venice before his assembled court :

*'Lors qu'un secret est possédé par un clerc,
Ce secret, il doit la dire, c'est clair.'*

"Allons, good! there is Chalamel with his proverbs!"

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Proverbs are the wisdom of nations; it is on this account I require your secret."

"Come, none of your nonsense. I tell you the head clerk made me promise not to speak of it to any one."

"Yes; but he did not say that you should not tell it to every one?"

"It shall not go out of the office. Go on."

"He is dying with desire to tell us the secret."

"Well! the patron is about selling his notary's business. At this present moment, perhaps, it is done."

"Ah bah!"

"Here is droll news!"

"Let us see, without charge, *who* charges himself with the charge which he discharges!"

"Dieu! how insupportable this Chalamel is with his riddles."

"Do you think I know to whom he sells it?"

"If he sells it, it is because, perhaps, he wishes to come out, give fêtes, routs, as they call them, in the gay world. After all, there is something in it."

"I think so, indeed! The head clerk spoke of more than a million, including the value of the business."

"More than a million!"

"It is said that he has been gambling in stocks secretly with the Commandant Robert, and that he has made much money."

"Not to speak of his living like a curmudgeon."

"But these misers, when once they begin to spend money, become as prodigal as they were once mean."

"Well, I agree with Chalamel; I think that now the patron is coming out."

"And he would be most stupendously in the wrong not to bury himself in voluptuousness, and not to plunge into the delights of Golconda, if he has the means; for, as the vaporous Osian says, in the grotto of Fingal,

*"Tout notaire qui bambochera
S'il a du quibus aura."*

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"It is absurd!"

"Yes, and the patron looks very much like a man who thinks of amusing himself. He has a face that might cause the devil to appear on earth."

"And then M. Cursé, who boasts of his charity!"

"Well! a well-ordered charity begins at home!"

"You do not know your ten commandments, heathen! If the patron asks from himself the aims of great pleasures, it is his duty to grant them."

"What astonishes me is, that this intimate friend, who seems to have dropped from the clouds, never leaves him."

"Not to mention his ugly face."

"He is as red-haired as a carrot."

"I am rather inclined to believe that this intruder is the fruit of a '*faux pas*' which M. Ferrand has committed in the springtime of life, for, as the Eagle of Meaux said concerning the taking of the veil by the tender La Valière,

*"Qu'on aime jeune homme où vieux bêtard,
Souvent la fin est un moutard."*

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"In truth, with him it is impossible to talk reason a moment."

"What stupidity! To say that this unknown is the son of the patron, when he is the oldest, that is easy to be seen."

"Well, what of that?"

"How! what of that? That the son should be older than the father?"

"It is very plain; in that case, the intruder must have made the '*faux pas*,' and be the father of M. Ferrand, instead of being his son."

"I demand the head of Chalamel!"

"Do not listen to him; you know, when once he is in the way of saying stupid things, there is no end to it."

"What is certain is, that this intruder has a bad face, and does not leave M. Ferrand for a moment."

"He is always with him in his cabinet; they eat together; one does not move without the other."

"I think I have seen the man before."

"I think not."

"Tell me, messieurs, have you not also remarked, that for some days past, there comes regularly almost every two hours a man with great light mustaches and a military air, who asks the porter for the intruder? The intruder comes down, talks for a moment with the man with mustaches, after which the latter makes a half turn like an automaton, to come again in two hours after."

"It is true; I have remarked him. It seems to me, also, that I meet some men when I go into the street who appear to be watching the house."

"Seriously, there is something extraordinary going on here."

"Who lives long enough will see."

"On this subject the head clerk, perhaps, knows more than we do. But he plays the diplomatist."

"Exactly; and where is he, then, for so long a time?"

"He has gone to the house of the countess who was stabbed; it appears that she is now out of danger."

"The countess, Sarah McGregor!"

"Yes; this morning she sent for the patron to come at once, but he sent the head clerk in his place."

"It is perhaps for a will."

"No, because she is better."

"Hasn't he work enough now, the head clerk, since he has taken Germain's place also?"

"Speaking of Germain, here is another strange thing."

"What is it?"

"The patron, in order to have him set at liberty, has declared that it was he himself who made an error in his accounts, and that he had

found the money which he accused Germain of stealing."

"I do not find this strange, but just; you recollect I have always said that Germain was incapable of theft."

"It must, nevertheless, have been very disagreeable for him to be arrested and confined as a thief."

"If I were in his place I would sue Jacques Ferrand for damages."

"The least he could do would be to reinstate him as cashier, in order to prove that Germain was not culpable."

"Yes, but perhaps Germain would not be willing."

"Is he still at the farm, where he went on coming out of prison, and from which he wrote us to announce M. Ferrand's discontinuance of the suit?"

"Probably, for yesterday I went to the place where he directed us to go; they told me that he was still in the country, and that I could write to him at Bouqueval, near Ecouen, at Madame George's."

"Ah! messieurs, a carriage!" said Chalmel, leaning over towards the window. "Dame! it is not a dashing equipage like that of the famous vicomte. Do you recollect this dashing vicomte with his 'chasseur' laced with silver, and his fat coachman with the white wig?"

"This time it is nothing but a hack."

"And who gets out?"

"Stop a moment! Ah! a black robe!"

"A woman! a woman! Oh! let us see."

"Dieu! this 'gutter-jumper' is indecently sensitive at his age; he only thinks of women; we shall have to chain him up, or he will carry off the Sabines from the streets; for, as said the Swan of Cambray in his *Treatise on Education* for the Dauphin,

'Defrez-vous der saute-ruisseau
Au beau sexe qui donne l'assaut.'

Of gutter-jumper have a care
Who assaults the lovely fair."

"I demand the head of Chalmel!"

"Dame! Monsieur Chalmel, you said a black robe, I thought."

"It is M. le Curé, goose! Let him be an example for you."

"The curé of the parish! The good pastor!"

"Himself, messieurs."

"Here is a worthy man!"

"He is no Jesuit, not he."

"I think not; and if all the priests were like him, everybody would be devout."

"Silence! some one opens the door."

And all the clerks, bending over their desks, began to scratch away with apparent industry, making their pens pass rapidly over the paper.

The pale face of this priest was at once mild and grave, intelligent and venerable; his expression full of benevolence and serenity.

A small black cap concealed his "tonsure," and his long gray hair floated on the collar of his maroon-coloured surtout.

Let us add, that from his simple credulity, this excellent priest had always been and was still the dupe of Jacques Ferrand's deep and cunning hypocrisy.

"Your worthy pastor; is he in his cabinet, my children?" asked the curé.

"Yes, Monsieur l'abbé," said Chalmel, rising respectfully. And he opened for the priest the door leading into a room adjoining the office.

Hearing some one speaking with vehemence in the cabinet of the notary, the abbé, not wishing to hear, walked rapidly towards the door and knocked.

"Come in," said a voice with an Italian accent, and the priest found himself face to face with Jacques Ferrand and Polidori.

It would seem that the clerks were not wrong when they prophesied the death of their patron at no distant day.

Since the flight of Cécily the notary was hardly to be recognised.

"Although his visage was of a frightful thinness, and of a cadaverous hue, a hectic flush coloured his hollow cheeks; a nervous shivering, except when interrupted by convulsive spasms, agitated his frame continually; his bony hands were dry and burning; his large green spectacles concealed his blood-shot eyes, which sparkled with the fire of a consuming fever; in a word, this sinister face betrayed the ravages of a rapid consumption."

The physiognomy of Polidori formed a contrast with that of the notary; nothing could be more bitterly, more coldly ironical than the expression of this scoundrel; a forest of fiery red hair, interspersed with some silvered locks, crowned his high and wrinkled forehead; his penetrating eyes, green as the ocean wave, were close to his hooked nose; his mouth, with its thin lips, expressed wickedness and sarcasm. Polidori, completely dressed in black, was seated beside the desk of Jacques Ferrand.

At the sight of the priest they both arose.

"Well! how do you get on, my worthy Monsieur Ferrand!" said the abbé with solicitude; "are you a little better?"

"I am always in the same state, Monsieur l'abbé; the fever does not leave me," answered the notary; "the want of sleep is killing me. But the will of God be done!"

"See, Monsieur l'abbé," added Polidori, with emphasis, "what pious resignation! my poor friend is always the same; he only finds a solace for his sufferings in doing good."

"I do not deserve these praises; have the goodness to dispense with them," said the notary, dryly, with difficulty concealing his anger. "To the Lord alone belongs the appreciation of good and evil; I am only a miserable sinner."

"We are all sinners," answered the abbé, gently; "but we have not all the charity which distinguishes you, my respected friend. There are very few who, like you, dispose themselves of so much of their earthly wealth to employ it during their lifetime in a manner so Christian-like. Do you still persist in selling your business, in order to devote yourself more entirely to the practice of religion?"

"Since yesterday, my business is sold, Monsieur l'abbé; some concessions have enabled me to realize (a rare thing) the cash down: this sum, added to others, will enable me to found the institution of which I have spoken, and of which I have definitively arranged the plan that I am about to submit to you."

"Ah! my worthy friend," said the abbé, with deep and reverential admiration, "to do so

much good—so unostentatiously—and, I may say, so naturally! I repeat to you, people like you are rare; they will receive their reward."

"It is true that very few persons unite, like Jacques Ferrand, riches to piety, intelligence to charity," said Polidori, with an ironical smile, which escaped the notice of the good abbé.

At this new and sarcastic eulogium, the hand of the notary was clutched; he cast from under his spectacles a look of deadly hatred on Polidori.

"You see, Monsieur l'Abbé," the "intimate friend" of Jacques Ferrand hastened to say, "he has continually these nervous spasms, and he will do nothing for them. He worries me; he is his own executioner, my poor friend!"

At these words of Polidori, the notary shuddered still more convulsively, but he composed himself again.

A man less simple than the abbé would have remarked, during this conversation, and, above all, during what is about to follow, the notary's constrained manner of speaking; for it is hardly necessary to say that a will superior to his own, the will of Rodolphe, in a word, imposed on this man words and acts diametrically opposed to his true character.

Thus, sometimes pushed to extremities, the notary appeared reluctant to obey this all-powerful and invisible authority; but a look from Polidori put an end to his indecision; then, constraining with a sigh of rage his most violent feelings, Jacques Ferrand submitted to the yoke which he could not break.

"Alas! Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori, who seemed to take delight in torturing his victim, as is said vulgarly, by pricks of a pin, "my poor friend neglects his health too much. Tell him to be more careful of himself, if not for his own sake, for his friends', or, at least, for the unfortunates of whom he is the hope and support."

"Enough! enough!" murmured the notary.

"No, it is not enough," said the priest, with emotion; "we cannot repeat to you too often that you do not belong to yourself, and that it is wrong to thus neglect your health. In ten years that I have known you, I have never seen you ill; but for a month past you are no longer recognisable. I am so much the more struck with this alteration of your features, as I was for some time without seeing you. Thus, at our first interview, I could not conceal my surprise; but the change I have remarked in you for the last few days is much more serious; you sink every hour, you give us much uneasiness. I implore you, my worthy friend, take care of your health."

"I am very sensible of your solicitude, Monsieur l'Abbé; but I assure you that my condition is not so alarming as you think."

"Since you are so obstinate," said Polidori, "I will tell everything to the abbé; he loves you—he esteems you—he honours you much; how much the more will he honour you when he shall know your new merits—when he shall know the true cause of your wasting away!"

"What is this!" asked the abbé.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said the notary, with impatience, "I begged you to come here to communicate to you projects of high importance, and not to hear me ridiculously praised by my friend."

"You know, Jacques, that from me you must be resigned to hear everything," said Polidori, looking fixedly at the notary, who cast down his eyes, and remained silent. Polidori continued:

"You perhaps remarked, Monsieur l'Abbé, that the first symptoms of his nervous complaint appeared a short time after the abominable scandal which Louise Morel caused in this house."

The notary shuddered.

"You know the crime of this unhappy girl, monsieur!" demanded the astonished priest; "I thought you had arrived but a few days since at Paris!"

"Without doubt, Monsieur l'Abbé; but Jacques has related everything to me, as his friend—as his physician, for he attributes these nervous attacks almost entirely to the indignation which the crime of Louise Morel caused him. This is nothing, as yet; my poor friend, alas! had new trials to endure, which, you see, have ruined his health. An old servant, who for many years was attached to him by the ties of gratitude—"

"Madame Séraphin?" said the curé, interrupting Polidori; "I have heard of the death of this unfortunate, drowned by her own imprudence, and I comprehend the grief of M. Ferrand: it is not easy to forget ten years of faithful services; such regrets do credit to the master as well as the servant." "Monsieur l'Abbé" said the notary, "I entreat you, do not speak of my virtues—you confuse me—it is painful."

"And who will speak of them then—will it be yourself?" answered Polidori, affectionately; "but you will be obliged to praise him still more, Monsieur l'Abbé: you perhaps do not know who is the servant that took the place of Louise Morel and Madame Séraphin. You do not know what he has done for this poor Cécily, Monsieur l'Abbé, for so she is named."

The notary started from his seat, his eyes sparkling under his spectacles, a burning red diffused over his livid face.

"Hush! be silent!" he cried; "not a word more. I forbid it."

"Come, come, calm yourself," said the abbé, smiling benevolently; "another good action to reveal! As for myself, I strongly approve of the generous indiscretion of your friend. I did know this servant, for it was just after her arrival that my worthy friend, overwhelmed with business, was obliged momentarily, to my great regret, to interrupt our relations."

"It was to conceal from you this new good action he meditated, Monsieur l'Abbé; thus, although his modesty revolts at the mention of it, he must hear me, and you shall know all," said Polidori, smiling.

Jacques Ferrand was silent; he leaned on his desk, and concealed his face in his hands.

CHAPTER II.

THE BANK FOR THE POOR.

"IMAGINE then, Monsieur l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, addressing the curé, but emphasizing, as it were, each phrase by an ironical glance

at Jacques Ferrand, "imagine that my friend found in his new servant, who, as I have already told you, was called Cécily, the best qualities, great modesty, angelic sweetness, and, above all, much piety. This is not all; Jacques, you know, owes to his long practice in business affairs, an extreme penetration; he soon saw that this young woman, for she was young and very pretty, Monsieur l'Abbé—that this young and pretty woman was not made for a servant, and that, to principles most virtuously austere, she added solid accomplishments very diversified."

"Ah, indeed, this is strange," said the abbé, much interested. "I was entirely ignorant of these circumstances; but what is the matter, my good M. Ferrand? You seem to be suffering."

"In truth," said the notary, wiping the cold sweat from his brow, "I have a slight headache, but it will soon pass away."

Polidori shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "Observe, Monsieur l'Abbé," he added, "that Jacques is always thus when any one unveils his hidden charities; he is so hypocritical on the subject of the good he does! Happily, I am here, and justice shall be done him. Let us return to Cécily. In her turn she had soon found out the excellence of his heart, and, when he interrogated her as to the past, she confessed to him that, a stranger, without resources, and reduced by the misconduct of her husband to the most humble condition, she regarded it as a boon from Heaven that she had been enabled to enter the house of a man so venerable as M. Ferrand. At the sight of so much misfortune, resignation, virtue, Jacques did not hesitate; he wrote to the native country of this unfortunate to ascertain the truth of her story; the answer confirmed it in every particular; then, sure of not misplacing his benefactions, Jacques blessed Cécily as a father, sent her back to her own country with a sum of money which will enable her to wait for better days, and the chance of improving her condition. I will not add a word of praise for Jacques; the facts are more eloquent than my words."

"Good, very good," cried the curé, much affected. "Monsieur l'Abbé," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice, "I do not wish to trespass upon your precious moments; speak no more of me, I implore you, but of the project for which I have begged you to come here and favour me with your advice."

"I perceive that the praises of your friend wound your modesty; let us occupy ourselves, then, with your new good deeds, and forget that you are the author; but, first, let us speak of the business you intrusted to my care. I have, according to your wishes, deposited in the Bank of France, and in my name, the sum of one hundred thousand crowns, destined to the restitution of which you are the intermediate agent, and which was to pass through my hands. You have preferred that this deposit should not remain in your possession, although it seems to me it had been quite as secure there as in the bank."

"In that respect, M. l'Abbé, I have conformed to the intentions of the unknown author of this restitution. It is an affair of conscience. At his request I have placed this sum in your hands,

and begged you to remit it to madame, the widow Ferrand, whose maiden name was Renneville" (the voice of the notary trembled slightly in uttering these names), "when she should present herself to you, and prove herself to be entitled to the same."

"I will accomplish the mission which you confided to me," said the priest.

"It is not the last, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"So much the better, if the others resemble this; for, without wishing to seek for the motives which impel it, I am always touched by a voluntary restitution. These lofty acts, which conscience alone dictates, are always the indications of sincere repentance, and it is no barren expiation."

"In truth, Monsieur l'Abbé, to restore a hundred thousand francs at once is rare; as for me, I have been more curious than you; but what availed my curiosity against the unshaken discretion of Jacques? Thus, I am still ignorant of the person's name who has made this noble restitution."

"Whoever he may be," said the abbé, "I am certain that he stands very high in the esteem of Monsieur Ferrand."

"This honest man is indeed, Monsieur l'Abbé, placed very high in my esteem," answered the notary, with a bitterness badly disguised.

"And this is not all, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori, looking at Jacques Ferrand in a significant manner; "you will see how far these generous scruples of this unknown extend; and, if I must speak plainly, I suspect our friend of having contributed not a little to awaken these scruples, and of having found the means to calm them."

"How is that?" asked the priest.

"What do you mean to say?" added the notary.

"And the Morels! this good and virtuous family?"

"Ah! yes, yes; in truth, I forgot," said Jacques Ferrand, in a hollow voice.

"Imagine, Monsieur l'Abbé," resumed Polidori, "that the author of this restitution, without doubt advised by Jacques Ferrand, not content with restoring this considerable sum, wishes still—but I will leave my worthy friend to explain; it is a pleasure of which I will not deprive him."

"I listen to you, my dear Monsieur Ferrand," said the priest.

"You know," said Jacques Ferrand, with involuntary emotions of revolt against the part which was imposed on him—feelings which were betrayed by the alteration of his voice and the hesitancy of his speech; "you know, Monsieur l'Abbé, that the misconduct of Louise Morel was such a terrible blow for her father, that he has become mad. The numerous family of the artisan ran the risk of dying from want, deprived of their sole support. Happily, Providence has come to their succour; and the person who has made the voluntary restitution of which you are the agent, Monsieur l'Abbé, has not thought this a sufficient expiation for a great abuse of confidence. He asked me if I did not know any deserving family in want of assistance. I mentioned the Morels, and he begged me, at the same time giving me the necessary funds, which I will hand to you presently, to

request you to settle an annuity of two thousand francs on Morel, revertible to his wife and children."

"But, in truth," said the abbé, "in accepting this new charge, doubtless very responsible, I am astonished that it was not bestowed on you."

"The unknown person has thought, and I coincide with him, that his good works would acquire an additional value, would be, thus to speak, sanctified by passing through hands as pious as yours, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"To that I have nothing to answer; I will purchase an annuity of two thousand francs for Morel, the worthy and unfortunate father of Louise. But I think with your friend here that you have not been a stranger to the resolution which has dictated this new expiatory gift."

"I have pointed out the Morel family, nothing more; I beg you to believe me, Monsieur l'Abbé," answered Jacques Ferrand.

"Now," said Polidori, "you are going to see, Monsieur l'Abbé, what noble philanthropic views my friend Jacques has concerning the charitable establishment of which we have already had some conversation; he is going to read to you the plan which he has definitively arranged; the money necessary for the capital is there in the chest; but, since yesterday, he has had some scruples, and if he does not mention them to you, I will do it for him."

"It is useless," replied Jacques Ferrand, who sometimes chose rather to wound his feelings by his own words than to submit in silence to the ironical praises of his tormentor. "Here is the fact, Monsieur l'Abbé. I have thought that it would be more modest—more Christian-like, that this establishment should not be instituted in my name."

"But this humility is overstrained," cried the abbé. "You can—you ought to pride yourself on your charitable investment. It is right, almost a duty, for you to attach your name to it."

"I prefer, Monsieur l'Abbé, to preserve the 'incognito;' I am resolved on it; and I count on your kindness to make all the necessary arrangements, and select the inferior officers of the establishment; I reserve alone for myself the nomination of the director and porter."

"Even if it were not a real pleasure for me to assist you in your good works, it would be my duty to accept the office."

"Now, Monsieur l'Abbé, if you will allow it, my friend will read you the plan decided upon."

"Since you are so obliging, my friend," said Jacques Ferrand, with bitterness, "read it yourself. Spare me this trouble, I pray you."

"No, no," answered Polidori, casting a look at the notary which he well understood, "it gives me great pleasure to hear from your own lips the noble sentiments which have guided you in this work of philanthropy."

"So be it—I will read," said the notary, hastily, taking up a paper which lay upon his desk.

Polidori, for a long time the accomplice of Jacques Ferrand, knew the crimes and secret thoughts of the scoundrel; thus he could not suppress a malicious smile on seeing him forced to read this paper dictated by Rodolphe. As is seen, the prince showed himself inexorable in the logical manner with which he punished the notary.

Luxurious—he tortured him by luxury.

Covetous—by covetousness.

Hypocritical—by hypocrisy.

For, if Rodolphe had chosen this venerable abbé to be the agent for the restitutions and expiations imposed on Jacques Ferrand, it was because he wished doubly to punish him for having, by his detestable hypocrisy, obtained the esteem and affection of the good priest. Was it not, in effect, a great punishment for this hideous impostor—this hardened criminal, to be constrained to practise, at length, the Christian virtues which he had so often feigned to possess, and this time really to deserve the just eulogiums of a respectable priest who had been his dupe?

Jacques Ferrand read the following note with feelings easily imagined.

"Establishment of the Bank for workmen without work."

"Let us love one another."

"These divine words contain the germe of all duties, of all virtues, of all charities."

"They have inspired the humble founder of this institution."

"To God alone belong the benefits that it may confer."

"Limited, as to the means of action, the founder has wished that the greatest number possible of his brothers should participate in the succour offered."

"He addresses himself, in the first place, to honest, industrious workmen, with families, whom the want of work often reduces to the most cruel extremities."

"It is not a degrading alms which he gives to his brothers, it is a gratuitous loan which he offers."

"May this loan, as he hopes, prevent them often from resorting to those cruel pledges which they are forced to make (while awaiting the return of work), for the purpose of sustaining a family of which they are the sole support."

"The only guarantee for this loan which he demands from his brothers, is their oath and honour."

"It has a revenue of twelve thousand francs, which will be loaned without interest to workmen with families and destitute of work, in sums of from twenty to forty francs."

"These loans shall only be made to workmen or women who shall bring a certificate of good conduct from their last employer, who will state the cause and date of the suspension of employment."

"These loans will be reimbursable monthly, by sixths or twelfths, at the choice of the borrower, commencing from the day on which he finds employment."

"He will subscribe a simple engagement of honour to reimburse the loan at stated periods."

"To this will be added, as endorsers, the names of two of his companions."

"The workman who shall not reimburse the amount borrowed by him, cannot, he or his endorsers, have any claims for a new loan; for he will have forfeited a sacred engagement, and, above all, deprived several of his brothers of the advantages which he has enjoyed."

"The sums loaned, on the contrary, being scrupulously repaid, the same benefit can be bestowed on others."

"Not to degrade man by alms.

"Not to encourage idleness by a fruitless charity.

"To stimulate sentiments of honour and innate probity among the labouring classes.

"To come in a brotherly manner to the aid of the workman, who, living already with difficulty from day to day, cannot, when no work can be procured, *suspend* his wants or those of his family, because his work is suspended.

"Such are the thoughts which have given rise to this institution.

"May he who has said, '*Love one another*,' be glorified."

"Ah! monsieur," cried the abbé, with religious admiration, "what a charitable idea! how well I can comprehend your emotion on reading these lines of such touching simplicity."

In truth, while finishing this reading, the voice of Jacques Ferrand was broken, his impatience and temper were at an end; but, watched by Polidori, he dared not, he could not transgress the least orders of Rodolphe. Let his rage be imagined at being forced to dispose so liberally of his fortune in favour of a class whom he had so unmercifully persecuted in the person of Morel the lapidary.

"Is not the idea of Jacques excellent, Monsieur l'Abbé?" asked Polidori.

"Ah! monsieur, I, who am acquainted with all kinds of poverty, I can comprehend better than any one, of what importance this loan would be to poor and honest workmen without employ.

* * * * *

"Indigence without employment never finds credit, or, if obtainable, it is at a most usurious rate; they will lend thirty sous at eight days, and then forty must be returned; and even these loans are very difficult to be obtained; those from the pawnbrokers cost often near three hundred per cent. The artisan without work often pledges for forty sous the only covering which, during the nights of winter, defends him and his from the rigour of the cold. But," added the abbé, with enthusiasm, "a loan of thirty or forty francs without interest, and reimbursable by twelfths, when work returns—for honest workmen, it is their safety, it is hope, it is life. And with what fidelity they would pay it back! It is a sacred debt, which they have contracted to give bread to their wives and children!"

"How precious the eulogiums of Monsieur l'Abbé must be to you, Jacques," said Polidori; "and how many more will he pronounce when he hears of your establishment of a gratuitous 'Mont de Piété.'"

"How?"

"Certainly, M. l'Abbé, Jacques has not forgotten this; it is a kind of appendage to his Bank for the Poor."

"Can it be true?" cried the priest, clasping his hands with admiration.

"Continue, Jacques," said Polidori.

The notary proceeded to read with a rapid voice, for the whole scene was odious and hateful to him:

"These loans have for their object the remedy for one of the gravest incidents in the life of a labourer—intermission of work. They shall

* A pawnbroker's shop.

therefore be granted only to those out of employment.

"But it remains to provide for the other cruel embarrassments, which reach even those with employment.

"Often, the loss of one or two days, caused sometimes by fatigue, by the attentions necessary to bestow on a wife or sick child, deprives the workman of his daily resources. Then he has recourse to the Mont de Piété, or to unlawful lenders of money, at an enormous rate of interest.

"Wishing, as much as possible, to lighten the burden of his brothers, the founder of the Bank for the Poor sets apart an income of twenty-five thousand francs a year, for the purpose of lending on pledges, not to exceed the amount of ten francs for each loan.

"The borrowers will pay neither costs nor interest, but they must prove that they follow an honourable profession, and produce a declaration from their employers, which will prove their morality.

"At the end of two years, the articles which have not been redeemed will be sold, without costs; the proceeds arising from the surplus of this sale shall be placed, at five per cent. interest, to the profit of the owners.

"At the end of five years, if this sum shall not be reclaimed, it shall be added to the Bank for the Poor.

"The administration and the office of said Bank shall be placed in the Rue du Temple, No. 17, in a house bought for this purpose, in the centre of this populous quarter. A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be appropriated to the expenses and to the administration of the Bank for the Poor, of which the director for life shall be—"

Polidori interrupted the notary, and said to the priest, "You will see, Monsieur l'Abbé, by the choice of the director of this establishment, whether Jacques knows how to repair the wrong which he has involuntarily done. You know that, by an error which he deplores, he had falsely accused his cashier of taking a sum which he afterward discovered." "Doubtless."

"Well! it is to this honest young man, named François Germain, that Jacques assigns the direction for life, of this bank, with a salary of four thousand francs. Is it not admirable, M. l'Abbé?" "Nothing astonishes me now, or, rather, nothing has astonished me," said the priest. "The fervent piety, the virtues of our worthy friend could hardly fail of such a result. To consecrate all his fortune to such an institution—ah! it is admirable!"

"More than a million, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori—"more than a million amassed by force of order, economy, and probity; and yet there are those who accuse Jacques of avarice! How, said they, his office brings him in fifty or sixty thousand francs a year, and he lives like a miser!"

"To such as these," replied the abbé, with enthusiasm, "I would answer: During fifteen years he has lived like a poor man, in order to be able at the present time magnificently to solate the poor."

"Be, then, at least proud and joyous at the good you have done," cried Polidori, addressing

Jacques Ferrand, who, gloomy and cast down, seemed absorbed in profound meditation.

"Alas!" said the abbé, sadly, "it is not in this world that one receives the recompense of so many virtues; he has a more exalted ambition."

"Jacques," said Polidori, touching the notary lightly on the shoulder, "finish your reading." The notary started, passed his hand over his face, and said to the priest,

"Pardon, Monsieur l'Abbé, but I was thinking—I was thinking of the immense extension that this bank for the poor might have from the returned loans. If the loans of each year were regularly repaid at the end of four years, it would have already loaned about fifty thousand crowns on pledge or gratuitously. It is enormous—enormous; and I felicitate myself on it," he added, thinking of the value of the sacrifice imposed upon him. He resumed: "I was, I believe, at—"

"At the nomination of François Germain, for director of the bank," said Polidori.

Jacques Ferrand continued:

"A revenue of ten thousand francs shall be set aside for the expenses and the administration of the bank for the poor without work, of which the perpetual director shall be François Germain, and the porter and keeper shall be the present porter of the house, named Pipelet.

"M. l'Abbé Dumont, with whom the funds necessary for this undertaking shall be deposited, will institute a superior council of supervision, composed of the mayor and the justice of the peace of the arrondissement, who will add to their number the persons whose assistance they shall consider useful to the extension of the Bank for the Poor; for the founder will esteem himself a thousand times paid for the little that he has done, if some charitable persons will aid in the work.

"The opening of this bank will be announced by every means of publicity possible.

"The founder repeats, in conclusion, that he takes no credit for what he has done for his brothers.

"His sole thought is but the echo of this Divine command:

"*Let us love one another.*"

"And your place above shall be assigned to you beside him who pronounced these immortal words," cried the abbé, pressing with much warmth the hand of Jacques Ferrand in his own.

The notary was overpowered. Without replying to the encomiums of the abbé, he hastened to give him in treasury bonds the considerable sum necessary for the establishment of this institution and for the annuity of Morel the lapidary.

"I dare hope, Monsieur l'Abbé," at length said Jacques Ferrand, "that you will not refuse this new mission confided to your charitable care. Besides, a stranger, called Sir Walter Murphy, who has given me some advice about the drawing up of this project, will partake of your labour, and will visit you to-day to converse with you on the practicability of the plan, and to place himself at your service, if he can be of any use. Except with him, I pray you to preserve the most profound secrecy, Monsieur l'Abbé."

"You are right. God knows what you are doing for your poor brothers. What matters the rest! All my regret is that I have nothing but my zeal to contribute in aid of this most noble institution; it will be, at least, as ardent as your charity is untiring. But what is the matter! You turn pale. Do you suffer!"

"A little, Monsieur l'Abbé. This long reading, the emotions caused by your kind words, the indisposition from which I am suffering. Pardon my weakness," said Jacques Ferrand, seating himself as if in pain; "there is nothing serious in it, but I am exhausted."

"Perhaps you had better go to bed," said the priest, with an air of lively interest, "and send for your physician?"

"I am a physician, Monsieur l'Abbé," said Polidori. "The situation of Jacques Ferrand demands great care; I will give him all my attention." The notary shuddered.

"A little repose will relieve you, I hope," said the curé. "I leave you; but before I go, I wish to give you a receipt for this money. Come, take courage, be of good cheer!" said the priest, handing the receipt, which he wrote at the desk, to Jacques Ferrand. "Farewell; to-morrow I will call and see you again. Adieu, monsieur—adieu, my friend, my worthy, pious friend!"

The priest went out, and Jacques Ferrand and Polidori remained alone.

CHAPTER III.

THE ACCOMPLICES.

HARDLY had the abbé gone when Jacques Ferrand uttered a terrible imprecation.

His despair and rage, so long restrained, burst forth with fury; breathless, his face convulsed, his eyes rolling in their sockets, he walked up and down in the cabinet like a wild beast confined by a chain.

Polidori, presenting the greatest composure, observed the notary attentively.

"Thunder and blood!" cried Jacques, in a voice choked with rage: "my fortune entirely swallowed up in these stupid good works! I, who despise and execrate men; I, who have only lived to deceive and despoil them; I found philanthropic establishments—to be forced to do it, by infernal means!—But is it the devil, then, who is your master?" he cried with fury, and stopping abruptly before Polidori.

"I have no master," he answered, coldly. "Like you, I have a judge!"

"To obey like a fool the orders of this man!" said Jacques Ferrand, with renewed rage. "And this priest, whom I have so often laughed at, because he was the dupe of my hypocrisy; every one of the praises he gave me was like a thrust with a dagger. And to be compelled—"

"Or the scaffold, as an alternative."

"Oh! not to be able to escape this fatal power! There is more than a million that I have given up. If I have left, with this house, a hundred thousand francs, it is the very outside. What more do they want!"

"You are not at the end yet. The prince knows, through Badinot, that your man of

straw, Petit Jean, was only a name borrowed by you for the purpose of making the usurious loans to the Vicomte de Saint Rémy. The sums which Saint Rémy repaid you were loaned to him by a great lady; probably another restitution awaits you; but it stands adjourned, doubtless, because it is a more delicate affair."

"Chained, chained here!"

"As securely as with an iron cable."

"You—my jailer—wretch!"

"What would you have? According to the system of the prince, nothing more logical: he punishes crime by crime, accomplice by accomplice."

"Oh! rage! madness!"

"Oh! unfortunately, powerless rage! for, as long as I am not told, Jacques Ferrand is free to quit this house, I will remain like your shadow. Listen, then; as well as you, I merit the scaffold. If I fail to execute the orders given to me, my head falls! You cannot, then, have a more incorruptible guardian. As for flying, both of us—impossible; we could not take a step outside of this house without falling into the hands of those who are watching it night and day."

"Death and fury, I know it!"

"Be resigned, then, for this flight is impossible; even should we succeed in escaping, it would only make our situation more precarious, for they would send the police in search of us. On the contrary, you, in obeying, and I, in watching the accuracy of your obedience, we are certain of not having our throats cut. Once more, I say, let us be resigned."

"Do not exasperate me by this indifference, or—"

"Or what? I do not fear you: I am on my guard, I am armed; and even if you were to find the poisoned dagger of Cécily to kill me—"

"Be quiet!"

"It would be of no use; you know that every two hours I am obliged to give a bulletin of your precious health, an indirect way of hearing from us both. On not seeing me appear, they will suspect you of the murder; you will be arrested. And—but hold—I do you an injury in supposing you capable of this crime. You have sacrificed a million to save your life, and you would not risk your head for the foolish and fruitless vengeance of killing me! Come, come, you are not fool enough for that."

"It is because you know I cannot kill you that you increase my torments by your sarcasms."

"Your position is so original, you do not see it yourself; but on my honour it is '*piquant*.'"

"Oh misfortune! misfortune irretrievable! on whatever side I turn it is death! And what I most dread now, is destruction! Curses on myself, on you, on the whole world!"

"Your misanthropy is more extensive than your philanthropy. The former embraces the whole world; the latter but one of the wards of Paris."

"Go on—rail, monster!"

"Would you prefer that I should crush you with reproaches?"

"Whose fault is it that we are reduced to this position?"

"Yours. Why preserve around your neck, suspended as a relic, that letter of mine relative

to the murder which was worth a hundred thousand crowns to you—the murder which we had so adroitly passed off as a suicide?"

"Why! wretch! Did I not give you fifty thousand francs for your co-operation in the crime, and for this letter, which I required that I might have a guarantee against your denouncing me? My life and fortune were, then, dependent on its possession; that is the reason why I always wore it around my neck."

"It is true, it was cunning on your part, for I would gain nothing by denouncing you, except the pleasure of going to the scaffold side by side with you. And yet your cunning has ruined us, while mine would have assured impunity for the crime to the present moment."

"Impunity?"

"Who could foresee what has come to pass? But, in the ordinary march of events, our crime would have been unpunished, thanks to me."

"Thanks to you?"

"Yes: when we had blown this man's brains out, you wished simply to counterfeit his signature, and, write to his sister that, ruined completely, he had killed himself from despair. You thought that you would make a great stroke of policy by not speaking in this letter of the deposit he had confided to you. It was absurd. This deposit being known to his sister, she would have unquestionably reclaimed it. It was necessary, then, on the contrary, to mention it as we did, in order that, if there were any suspicions of the reality of the suicide, you might be the last person to be suspected. Then what happened? The suicide was believed; from your reputation for probity, you were enabled to deny the deposit, and it was thought that the brother killed himself after having dissipated the fortune of his sister."

"But what matters all this at present? the crime is discovered."

"And thanks to whom? Was it my fault if my letter was a double-edged sword, cutting both ways? How could you be so weak, so stupid, as to deliver such a terrible weapon to this infernal Cécily?"

"Hush—do not pronounce that name!" cried Jacques Ferrand, with a frightful expression.

"So be it: I do not wish to make you epileptic. You will see that, in guarding against ordinary justice, our mutual precautions were sufficient; but the extraordinary justice of him who holds us in his power defied all calculations."

"Oh! I know it but too well."

"He believes that to cut off the head of a criminal does not sufficiently repair the evil he has done. With the proofs which he holds, if he were to deliver us to the tribunals, what would be the result? Two corpses, at the most only good to fatten the graveyard."

"Oh! yes—it is tears, and anguish, and tortures which this prince demands—this demon. But I do not know him, I have never done him any harm. Why does he pursue me thus?"

"In the first place, he pretends to reward the good, and punish the evil done to others; and, besides, he knows those whom you have injured, and he punishes you in his own way."

"But by what right?"

"Come, come, Jacques, between us, do not speak of right; he had the power to have your

head taken off in a judicial manner. What would have been the result? Your relations are all dead—the state would have profited by your fortune instead of those whom you have despoiled. On the contrary, in redeeming your life at the price of your money, all your victims will be remunerated for their sufferings, in the manner already decided upon. So in this point of view, we can confess to each other that if society would have gained nothing by your death, it gains much by your living."

"And it is this which causes my rage—and this is not my only torture."

"The prince knows it well. Now what will he decide to do with us? I am ignorant. He has promised to spare us our lives if we faithfully obey his orders. He will keep his promise. But if he does not believe our crimes sufficiently expiated, he will know how to make us prefer death a thousand times to the life he grants us. You do not know him. Besides, he has more than one devil in his service—for this Cécily—whom may the thunder blast!"

"Once more, be still—not that name—not that name!"

"Yes, yes! may the thunder blast her who bears that name! it is she who has ruined all. Our heads would now be in security on our shoulders, but for your silly love for this creature."

Instead of storming with rage, Jacques Ferrand answered, with a deep sigh,

"Do you know her—this woman? speak! Have you ever seen her?"

"Never. They say she is beautiful."

"Beautiful!" answered the notary, shrugging his shoulders. "Hold!" he added, with a kind of bitter desperation: "be still! do not speak of what you do not know. Do not accuse me. What I have done, you would have done in my place."

"I! place my life at the mercy of a woman!"

"Of that one—yes—and I would do it again!"

"By heaven! he is still under the charm," cried Polidori, amazed.

"Listen," answered the notary, in a low, calm voice, "listen: you know if I love gold? you know what I have braved to acquire it? To reckon up the sums I possessed, to see them doubled by my avarice, to endure every privation, and know myself the master of a treasure—it was my joy, my happiness. Yes, to possess, not to enjoy, but to theorize, was my life. One month since, if they had said to me, 'Between your fortune and your head choose,' I would have given up my head."

"But of what use to have money when one dies?"

"Ask me, then, Of what use to possess it, when one makes no use of what one possesses? I, a millionaire, did I lead the life of a millionaire! No: I lived like a poor beggar. I loved, then, to possess, for possession's sake."

"But, once more I ask you, of what use is it when one dies?"

"To the possessing! Yes, to enjoy that even to the last moment for which you have braved privations, misery, the scaffold: yes, to say once more, the head under the axe, *I possess!* Oh! do you see, death is sweet compared to the tortments that are endured on seeing one's self du-

ring life dispossessed, as I am, of all that I have amassed at the price of so much pain, so much danger! Oh! to say, at each instant of the day, 'I, who had more than a million—I, who have endured every privation to preserve it—I, who, in ten years, would have doubled it, tripled it—I have no longer anything.' It is cruel! it is to die, not each day, but each moment of the day. Yes, to this horrible agony, which may endure for years, perhaps, I would have preferred death a thousand times. Once more, I could have said in dying, *I possess.*"

Polidori looked at his accomplice with profound astonishment.

"I cannot comprehend you. Then why have you obeyed the commands of him who might have caused your head to roll from the scaffold? Why have you preferred life, without your treasure, if this life seems so horrible to you?"

"It is, do you see," answered the notary, in a voice sunk to a whisper, "it is not the thought of death—it is annihilation. And Cécily!"

"And you hope!" cried Polidori, astonished.

"I hope not: I possess—"

"What!"

"The remembrance."

"But you will never see her again: she has delivered up your head!"

"But I love her still, and more madly than ever," cried Jacques Ferrand, with an explosion of tears, of sobs, which strangely contrasted with the calmness of his last words. "Yes, I love her always, and I do not wish to die, so that I can plunge myself deeper and deeper with wild delight into this furnace where I am consumed by inches. For you do not know—that night—that night in which I saw her so beautiful—that night is always present to my thoughts—that picture of voluptuousness is there, there—always there—before my eyes. Let them be open or shut, in feverish weakness or burning watchfulness, I see her black eyes and inflaming glances, which boil the marrow of my bones. I feel her breath upon my face—I hear her voice."

"But these are frightful torments!"

"Frightful! aye, frightful! But death! but annihilation! but to lose forever this remembrance, as vivid as reality; but to renounce these recollections, which torture me, devour me, and consume me! No! no! no! Live! live—poor, despised, scorned—live in the galleys, but live! so that thought remains—since this infernal creature has all my thought—is all my thought!"

"Jacques," said Polidori, in a grave tone, which strangely contrasted with his habitual bitter irony, "I have seen much suffering, but never tortures that approached yours. He who holds us in his power could not have been more unmerciful. He has condemned you to live—or, rather, to await death in terrible agonies—for this avowal explains to me the alarming symptoms which every day develops in you, and of which I sought in vain the cause."

"But these symptoms are nothing serious! It is exhaustion; it is the reaction of my sorrows! I am not in danger. Is it not so?"

"No, no; but your position is a critical one; you must not make it worse. Certain thoughts must be driven away, otherwise you run great risk."

"I will do what you wish, so I may live, for

I do not wish to die. Oh! the priests talk of the damned! never could one imagine for them a punishment equal to mine. Tortured by passion and avarice, I have two bleeding wounds instead of one, and I feel both of them equally. The loss of my gold is frightful to me, but death would be more frightful still. I wish to live; my life may be a torture without end, and I dare not call upon death, for death annihilates my fatal happiness, this phantom of my thoughts, in which Cécily constantly appears."

"You have at least the consolation," said Polidori, resuming his usual calmness, "of thinking upon the good that you have done in expiation of your crimes."

"Yes, rail—you are right; turn me over on the burning coals. You know well, wretch, that I hate humanity; you know well that these expiations which are imposed upon me, only inspire me with hatred against those who oblige me to act thus, and against those who profit by it. Thunder and blood! To think that, while I drag along a frightful life, these men whom I execrate have their misery soled; that this widow and her daughter will thank God for the fortune I restore them—that this Morel and his daughter will live in ease and comfort—that this Germain will have an honourable situation assured to him for life! And this priest! this priest, who blessed me when my heart was swimming in gall and blood—I could have stabbed him! Oh! it is too much! No! no!" he cried, covering his face with his hands: "my head bursts—my ideas are confused—I cannot resist such attacks of impotent rage! And all this for you! Cécily! Cécily! do you know how much I suffer! do you know, Cécily—demon—brought out from hell!"

And Jacques Ferrand, exhausted by this frightful raving, fell back foaming on his chair, and threw his arms wildly about, uttering hollow and inarticulate sounds.

This fit of convulsive and despairing rage by no means astonished Polidori.

Possessing a consummate medical experience, he at once saw that Ferrand's anguish at seeing himself dispossessed of his fortune, joined to his passion for Cécily, had lighted up the flames of a devouring fever.

* * * * *

Suddenly, some one knocked hurriedly at the door of the cabinet.

"Jacques!" said Polidori, to the notary; "Jacques! recover yourself; here is some one."

The notary did not hear him. Half lying on his desk, he writhed with convulsive spasms. Polidori went to open the door, and saw the head clerk, who, pale and alarmed, cried,

"I must speak at once to Monsieur Ferrand."

"Silence! he is at this moment very ill; he cannot understand you," said Polidori, in a whisper; and, coming out from the cabinet, he closed the door after him.

"Ah! monsieur," cried the clerk, "you are the best friend of M. Ferrand's; come to his assistance; there is not a moment to be lost."

"What do you mean?"

"I went, according to the orders of M. Ferrand, to tell Madame la Comtesse McGregor that he could not visit her to-day as she desired."

"Well?"

"This lady, who appears to be now out of danger, made me come into her room. She cried, in a threatening tone, 'Return, and tell M. Ferrand that if he is not here in an hour he shall be arrested for forgery, for the child which he pretended was dead is yet alive. I know to whom he delivered her—I know where she is.'"

"The woman is crazy," answered Polidori, coldly, shrugging his shoulders.

"You think so, monsieur?"

"I am sure of it."

"I thought so at first; but the assertions of Madame la Comtesse—"

"Her head, doubtless, has been weakened by illness, and the visionary always believe in their visions."

"I ought to tell you also, monsieur, that at the moment when I left the chamber of the countess, one of her women entered precipitately, saying, 'His highness will be here in an hour!'"

"It is the prince," thought Polidori. "He at the house of the Countess Sarah, whom he was never to see again! I do not know wherefore, but I do not like this meeting; it may make our position worse." Then turning to the clerk, he said, "Once more I repeat that this is nothing. I will, however, inform M. Ferrand of what you have just related to me."

CHAPTER IV.

RODOLPHE AND SARAH.

WE will conduct the reader to the Countess Sarah's, whom a salutary crisis had snatched from the delirium and sufferings which, during several days, had caused the most serious fears for her life.

The day began to close. Sarah, seated in a large arm-chair, and supported by her brother, Thomas Seyton, was attentively surveying herself in a mirror, which was held by one of her women kneeling before her.

This scene passed in the saloon where La Chouette had made her murderous attempt.

The countess was as pale as marble, which gave a bolder relief to her dark eyes and hair; a large "peignoir" of white muslin completely concealed her form.

"Give me the 'bandeau' of coral," she said to one of her women, in a weak but imperious voice.

"Betty will fasten it," said Thomas Seyton; "you will fatigue yourself; you are already so imprudent."

"The *bandeau*! the *bandeau*!" repeated Sarah, impatiently, as she took the jewel and placed it on her brow. "Now fasten it, and leave me," she added, to her women.

As they were retiring she said,

"Let them show M. Ferrand into the little blue saloon; and," she continued, with an expression of ill-concealed pride, "as soon as his royal highness the Grand-duke of Gerolstein arrives, he must be ushered in here."

"At length," said Sarah, throwing herself back in her chair as soon as she was alone

* The reader will remember that the countess thought Fleur de Maria was still at Saint Lazare, according to La Chouette's account.

with her mother, "at length I touch this crown—the dream of my life! The prediction is about to be accomplished!"

"Sarah, calm your emotion," said her brother, earnestly. "Yesterday, they still despaired of your life; disappointment now might cause a relapse."

"You are right, Tom. The fall would be dreadful, for my hopes have never been nearer being realized than now! I am certain that what has prevented me from sinking under my sufferings has been my constant hope to profit by the important revelation which this woman made me at the moment when she stabbed me."

"Even during your delirium you constantly referred to this idea."

"Because this idea alone sustained my flickering life. What a hope! Sovereign princess! almost a queen!" she added, with rapture.

"Once more, Sarah, no mad dreams; the awakening will be terrible."

"Mad dreams! How! when Rodolphe shall know that this young girl, now a prisoner at Saint Lazare, is our child, do you think that—"

Seyton interrupted his sister:

"I believe," he replied, with bitterness, "that princes place reasons of state and political proprieties, before natural ties."

"Do you count so little on my address?"

"The prince is not the same fond and enamoured youth whom you seduced in days gone by."

"Do you know why I have wished to ornament my hair with this band of coral? and why I have put on this white robe? It is because, the first time Rodolphe saw me at the court of Gerolstein, I was dressed in white, and I wore this same bandeau of coral in my hair."

"How!" said Thomas Seyton, looking at his sister with surprise; "you wish to evoke these memories; do you not, on the contrary, dread their influence?"

"I know Rodolphe better than you. Doubtless, my features, now changed by age and sufferings, are no longer those of the young girl of sixteen he so wildly loved—whom he has alone loved—for I was his first love. And this love, unique in the life of man, leaves always in his heart ineffaceable traces. Thus, believe me, my brother, the sight of this ornament will awaken in Rodolphe, not only the memories of his love, but also those of his youth; and to men the recollection of their first emotions is always sweet and precious."

"But to these soft memories are joined others of terrible import. Do you forget the fatal termination of your love? The conduct of the prince's father towards you? Your obstinate silence when Rodolphe, after your marriage with the Comte M'Gregor, demanded your child, then quite an infant! your daughter, of whose death, ten years before, you informed him in a cold letter! Do you forget that since that time the prince has only felt for you contempt—hatred?"

"Pity has taken the place of hatred. Since he has known that I was in a dying state, each day has been sent the Baron de Graun to make inquiries."

"From humanity."

"Just now he answered my note; said that

he would come here. This concession is immense, my brother."

"He believes you dying. He supposes that he is coming to take a last farewell. You were wrong not to write to him what you are now about to disclose."

"I know why I act thus. This revelation will fill him with surprise and joy, and I shall be present to profit by his first burst of tenderness. To-day, or never, he shall say to me, 'A marriage would make the birth of our child legitimate.' If he says so, his word is sacred, and the hope of all my life will at length be realized."

"If he makes you this promise—yes."

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage which entered the courtyard.

"It is he—it is Rodolphe," cried Sarah.

"Yes, it is the prince; he is getting out of the carriage."

"Leave me alone—this is the decisive moment," said Sarah, with immovable self-control; for a towering ambition and unbounded selfishness had always been and still were the ruling motives of this woman.

After a momentary hesitation, Thomas Seyton drew near to his sister and said,

"It is I who will inform the prince how your daughter has been saved; this interview will be too dangerous for you; a violent emotion would kill you."

"Your hand, my brother," said Sarah.

Then placing on her impassible heart the hand of Thomas Seyton, she added, with a forced and icy smile,

"Am I agitated?"

"No, in truth, not at all," said Seyton, with surprise; "I know what command you have over yourself. But at such a moment—wherefore you will be decided—a crown—or death—your calmness absolutely confounds me."

"Why this astonishment, my brother! did you not know that nothing—no, nothing has ever caused this marble heart to quicken its pulsations! it will only palpitate when I shall feel placed on my brow the sovereign crown. I hear Rodolphe—leave me."

"But—"

"Leave me," cried Sarah, in a tone so imperious, so resolute, that her brother left the apartment some moments before the prince was introduced. When Rodolphe entered the saloon, his countenance expressed pity; but seeing the countess seated in the chair decked with her jewels, he drew back with surprise, and his physiognomy became immediately sombre and suspicious.

The comtesse, divining his thoughts, said to him in a soft and feeble voice, "You thought to find me dying: you came to receive my last 'adieux'?"

"I have always regarded as sacred the last wishes of the dying, but it appears that I have been deceived."

"Reassure yourself," said Sarah, interrupting Rodolphe, "reassure yourself. I have not deceived you; there remain for me but a few hours to live. Pardon me a last act of coquetry; I wished to spare you the usual attendants of a deathbed. I wished to die dressed as I was the first time I saw you. Alas! after

ten years of separation, I see you again! Thanks—oh, thanks! But, in your turn, render praise to God for having moved you to come to listen to my last prayer. If you had refused me, I had carried with me to the tomb a secret which is going to make the joy, the happiness of your life. Joy mixed with some tears, like all other human felicity; but this felicity! you would buy it at the price of half the remaining days of your life!"

"What do you mean to say?" demanded the prince, with surprise.

"Yes, Rodolphe, if you had not come, this secret would have followed me to the tomb—it had been my sole vengeance; and yet—no, no, I should not have had this terrible courage. Although you would have caused me much suffering, I should have divided with you this supreme happiness, which, more fortunate than I, you will a long time enjoy."

"But, once more, madame, what is all this?"

"When you know it, you will comprehend my delay in informing you, for you will regard this revelation as a miracle from heaven. But, strange thought—I, who with one word can cause you the greatest happiness that you have ever experienced—I feel, although now the minutes of my life are counted—I feel an indescribable satisfaction in prolonging your suspense; and, besides, I know your heart, and, in spite of the firmness of your character, I should fear to announce to you, without preparation, a discovery so incredible. The emotions of sudden joy have also their dangers."

"Your pallor increases—you with difficulty restrain a violent agitation," said Rodolphe; "all this proves that something grave and important—"

"Grave and important!" repeated Sarah, in a faltering voice, for, notwithstanding her habitual immobility, in reflecting upon the immense importance of the revelation she was about to make to Rodolphe, she felt herself more agitated than she could have thought possible. After a moment's silence, Sarah, no longer able to restrain herself, cried,

"Rodolphe, our child is not dead."

"Our child!"

"I tell you, she lives!"

These words, the accent of truth with which they were pronounced, moved the prince to the very bottom of his heart. "Our child!" he repeated, advancing hastily towards Sarah; "our child! my daughter!"

"She is not dead; I have certain proofs; I know where she is—to-morrow you shall see her."

"My daughter! my child!" repeated Rodolphe, as if in a dream; "can it be possible! she is alive!"

Then suddenly reflecting on the great improbability of this relation, and fearing to be the dupe of Sarah, he cried, "No, no; it is a dream! it is impossible! you deceive me; it is a 'ruse,' an unworthy deceit!"

"Rodolphe, listen to me!"

"No, I know your ambition—I know of what you are capable: I can fathom the object of this fabrication!"

"Well! you speak the truth. I am capable of everything. Yes, I did wish to deceive you. Yes, some days before I received my mortal

wound, I did wish to find a young girl, whom I would have presented to you in the place of our child—whom you regret so bitterly."

"Enough—oh! enough, madame."

"After this confession you will believe me, perhaps; or, rather, you will be forced to give credence to the proofs."

"To the proofs!"

"Yes, Rodolphe: I repeat it, I have wished to deceive you, to substitute an obscure girl in the place of her, we mourn; but God willed that, at the moment when I was about to carry the project into execution, I should be stricken down."

"You! at this moment!"

"God has also willed that they should propose to me to play this part—do you know whom? our daughter."

"Are you delirious! In the name of Heaven—"

"I am not delirious, Rodolphe. In this case, among some papers and a portrait, which will prove to you the truth of what I say, you will find a paper stained with my blood."

"With your blood?"

"The woman who informed me that our child was still living dictated to me this revelation—then I was stabbed with a poniard."

"And who was she? how did she know?"

"It was to her our child was delivered—quite an infant—after having falsely reported her death."

"But this woman—her name? can she be believed! where did you become acquainted with her?"

"I tell you, Rodolphe, that all this is fate—providential. Some months since, you rescued a poor girl from poverty, to send her to the country—is it not so?"

"Yes, to Bouqueval."

"Jealousy and hatred drove me wild. I caused this young girl to be carried off by the woman of whom I have spoken."

"And she took the unhappy child to Saint Lazare?"

"Where she yet is."

"She is there no longer. Ah! you do not know, madame, the frightful evil you have caused by tearing this poor child from the retreat where I had placed her; but—"

"This young girl is no longer at Saint Lazare!" cried Sarah, with alarm; "and you speak of a frightful evil!"

"A monster of cupidity had an interest in her death. They have drowned her, madame; but answer, you say—"

"My daughter!" cried Sarah, interrupting Rodolphe, and rising on her feet, immovable as a marble statue.

"What does she say! my God!" cried Rodolphe.

"My child!" repeated Sarah, whose face became livid and frightful from despair; "they have killed my child!"

"The Goualeuse your child!" repeated Rodolphe, recoiling with horror.

"The Goualeuse! yes! that is the name the woman mentioned—this woman called La Chouette. Dead—dead!" cried Sarah, still motionless, her eyes fixed and glaring; "they have killed her!"

"Sarah!" replied Rodolphe, as pale and alarmed as she; "calm yourself—answer me

—La Goualeuse—this young girl whom you have caused to be carried off by La Chouette from Bouqueval, was—”

“Our child!”

“She!”

“And they have killed her!”

“Oh! no, no—you rave—this cannot be. You know not, no, you know not how frightful this is. Sarah! compose yourself; speak to me tranquilly. Seat yourself—calm yourself. Often there are appearances—resemblances which deceive; one is inclined to believe what one desires. It is not a reproach I make you; but explain to me well—tell me all the reasons you have to credit this, for it cannot be—no, no! it must not be!—it is not so!”

After a moment's pause, the countess collected her thoughts, and said to Rodolphe in an expiring voice,

“Hearing of your marriage, thinking to be married myself, I could not keep our daughter with me; she was then four years old.”

“But at this epoch I asked you for her with prayers,” cried Rodolphe, in a heart-rending tone, “and my letters remained unanswered. The only one you wrote me announced her death!”

“I wished to avenge myself for your contempt by refusing you your child. That was unworthy; but listen to me: I feel it—my life is drawing to a close; this last blow has overwhelmed me.”

“No, no! I do not believe you—I do not wish to believe you! La Goualeuse my child! Oh, mon Dieu! you would not this should be so!”

“Listen to me, I say. When she was four years old my brother commissioned Madame Séraphin, widow of one of his old servants, to bring up the child until she was old enough to be placed at school. The sum destined for her future support was placed by my brother with a notary renowned for his probity. The letters of this man, and of Madame Séraphin, addressed at this period to me and my brother, are there, in that casket. At the end of a year they wrote me that the health of my child failed; eight months after, that she was dead; and they sent me the official notification of her decease. At this time, Madame Séraphin entered the service of Jacques Ferrand, after having delivered our child to La Chouette by the hands of a wretch now in the galleys at Rochefort. I began to write this confession of La Chouette when she wounded me. This paper is there with a portrait of our daughter at the age of four years. Examine all—letters, confession, portrait—and you, who have seen her—this unfortunate child—judge.”

At these words, which exhausted her strength, Sarah fell back almost lifeless in her chair.

Rodolphe was thunderstruck at this revelation.

There are some misfortunes so unlooked for, so horrible, that we are unwilling to believe them until compelled by overwhelming evidence. Rodolphe, persuaded of the death of Fleur de Marie, had but one hope left, which was to convince himself that she was not his child.

With a frightful calmness, which alarmed Sarah, he approached the table, opened the cas-

ket, and fell to reading the letters one by one and examining, with scrupulous attention, the papers which accompanied them.

These letters, stamped at the postoffice, written to Sarah and her brother by the notary and by Madame Séraphin, related to the childhood of Fleur de Marie, and to the investment of the funds destined for her support. Rodolphe could not doubt the authenticity of this correspondence.

The confession of La Chouette was confirmed by the information obtained (of which we have spoken at the commencement of this history) by order of Rodolphe, and which pointed out a man named Pierre Tournemine, a prisoner at Rochefort, as the man who had received Fleur de Marie from Madame Séraphin to deliver her to La Chouette—to La Chouette, whom the unfortunate child herself had recognised before Rodolphe, at the tapis-franc of the Ogresse.

Rodolphe could no longer doubt the identity of these persons and of the Goualeuse.

The official notice concerning her death appeared in conformity to law; but Ferrand had himself acknowledged to Cécily that this forged notice had served for the spoliation of a considerable sum formerly settled as an annuity on the young girl whom he had caused to be drowned by Nicolas Martial, at the Island of the Ravageur.

It was, then, with growing and alarming anguish that Rodolphe acquired, in spite of himself, the terrible conviction that the Goualeuse was his daughter, and that she was dead.

Unfortunately for him, all seemed to confirm this belief. Before condemning Jacques Ferrand on the proofs given by the notary himself to Cécily, the prince, in his deep interest for the Goualeuse, having caused inquiries to be made at Asnières, had learned that, in effect, two women, one old and the other young, and dressed in a peasant's costume, had been drowned in going to the Island of the Ravageur, and that rumour accused the Martials of this new crime.

Here we must state that, in spite of the attention of Doctor Griffon, of the Comte de Saint Rémy, and of La Louve, Fleur de Marie, for a long time in a desperate situation, had hardly become convalescent, and that her weakness, mental and physical, was such, that she had not been able up to this time to inform Madame Georges or Rodolphe of her position.

This concurrence of circumstances could not leave the slightest hope to the prince.

A last proof was reserved for him.

At length he cast his eyes on the miniature, which he had almost feared to look at.

The blow was frightful.

In this infantine and charming face, already radiant with that divine beauty which belongs to the cherubims, he recognised in a striking manner the features of Fleur de Marie: her Grecian nose, her noble forehead, her little mouth, already slightly serious. For, said Madame Séraphin to Sarah, in one of her letters which Rodolphe had just read, “*The child asks always for its mother, and is very sad.*”

There were her large blue eyes, of a blue so pure and soft; a blue of “*bluet*,”* as La Chou-

* The blue-bottle.

ette had said to Sarah on recognising in this miniature the features of the unfortunate child, whom she had persecuted, in her infancy, under the name of Pegriotte, and as a young girl, under the name of La Goualeuse.

At the sight of this miniature, the tumultuous and violent feelings of Rodolphe were stifled by his tears.

He fell back, heart-broken, on a chair, and concealed his face in his hands, sobbing convulsively.

CHAPTER V.

VENGEANCE.

WHILE Rodolphe wept bitterly, the features of Sarah changed perceptibly.

At the moment when she thought she was about to realize the dream of her ambitious life, the last hope, which until now had sustained her, was crushed forever.

This dreadful disappointment could not fail to have on her health, momentarily ameliorated, a mortal reaction.

Fallen back in her chair, trembling with a feverish agitation, her hands crossed and clasped on her knees, her eyes fixed, the comtesse awaited with alarm the first word from Rodolphe. Knowing the impetuous character of the prince, she feared that the sad grief, which drew so many tears from this inflexible and resolute man, would be succeeded by some terrible transports of passion.

Suddenly Rodolphe raised his head, wiped away his tears, arose, and approached Sarah, his arms crossed on his bosom, his manner menacing and without pity. He looked at her for some moments in silence; then he said, in a hollow voice,

"This ought to be. I have drawn the sword against my father; I am stricken in my child. Just punishment of the parricide. Listen to me, madame—"

"Parricide! you, mon Dieu! Oh! fatal day; of what are you going to inform me?"

"It is necessary that you should know, in this awful moment, all the evils caused by your implacable ambition, by your unbounded selfishness. Do you understand me, woman without heart and without conscience? Do you hear me, unnatural mother?"

"Oh, have pity! Rodolphe—"

"No pardon for you, who formerly without pity for a sincere love, coldly trifled, in the furtherance of your execrable pride, with a generous and devoted passion, of which you feigned to partake. No mercy for you, who armed the son against the father! No grace for you, who, instead of watching piously over your child, abandoned her to mercenary hands, in order to satisfy your cupidity by a rich marriage, as you had already served your mad ambition by inciting me to marry you. No mercy for you, who, after having refused me my child, have now caused her death by your unholy deceptions! Maledictions on you—you, my evil genius, and that of my family!"

"Oh! mon Dieu! he is without pity! leave me, leave me!"

"You shall hear me, I tell you! Do you remember the last day I saw you—it is seventeen years since—you could no longer conceal the

fruits of our secret union, which, like you, I believed indissoluble. I knew the inflexible character of my father. I knew what political marriage he projected for me. Braving his indignation, I declared to him, that you were my wife before God and before man—that in a short time I should become a father. His anger was terrible; he would not give credence to my marriage—so much deception seemed impossible to him. He threatened me with his displeasure if I allowed myself to speak before him again of such folly. Then I loved you like a madman, dupe of your seductions. I thought that your rigid heart of brass had beaten for me. I answered to my father that I would never have any wife but you. At these words, his anger had no bounds; he called you the most outrageous names; swore that our marriage was null; and that, in order to punish your presumption, he would place you in the pillory. Yielding to my mad passion, to the violence of my temper, I dared to forbid my father, my sovereign, to speak thus of my wife. I dared to threaten him. Exasperated at this insult, my father struck me; rage blinded me. I drew my sword. I threw myself upon him. Except for M. Murph, who turned aside the blow, I had been a parricide in reality, as I was in intention! Do you hear? parricide! And to defend you—you!"

"Alas! I was ignorant of all this!"

"In vain I have thought my crime expiated; the blow I have received to-day is my punishment."

"But have I not also suffered from the obduracy of your father, who broke our marriage? Why accuse me of not having loved you? when—"

"Why?" cried Rodolphe, interrupting Sarah, and casting upon her a glance of withering scorn. "Know it then, and be no more surprised at the horror with which you inspire me. After this fatal scene, in which I had threatened the life of my father, I gave up my sword. I was imprisoned with the greatest secrecy. Polidori, through whom our marriage had been concluded, was arrested. He proved that this union was null; that the clergyman was only a mock one; and that you, your brother, and myself had all been deceived. To disarm my father's anger against him, Polidori did more; he gave him one of your letters to your brother, which he had intercepted."

"Heavens! can it be possible?"

"Is my contempt for you explained now?"

"Oh! enough, enough!"

"In this letter you unfolded your ambitious projects with revolting coolness. You treated me with an icy disdain; you sacrificed me to your infernal pride; I was only the instrument by whose means you were to obtain the fulfilment of your destiny. You found that my father lived a very long time."

"Unfortunate that I am! Now, I understand all."

"And to defend you, I had threatened the life of my father. When, on the morrow, without addressing me a word of reproach, he showed me this letter—this letter, which in every line revealed the blackness of your heart, I could only fall on my knees and ask for pardon. Since that day I have been pursued by unceasing remorse. Soon I left Germany on a long journey; then commenced the penance which I imposed upon myself. It will only finish with my life. To recompense the good, punish the bad, solace

those who suffer, probe all the wounds of humanity, to endeavour to snatch souls from perdition—such is the noble task that I have imposed upon myself."

"It is noble and holy; it is worthy of you."

"If I speak of this vow," replied Rodolphe, with as much disdain as bitterness; "of this vow, which I have fulfilled, according to my power, wherever I have been, it is not to be praised by you. Listen to me, then. Not long since I arrived in France; my sojourn in this country was not to be lost to the expiation. In wishing to assist honest unfortunates, I also wished to know those classes whom poverty crushes, hardens, and depraves, knowing that timely succour and kind words have often saved many a poor wretch from the abyss of despair. In order to be my own judge, I assumed the disguise and language of the people whom I wished to observe. It was on one of these excursions, that, for the first time, I—I met—" Then, as if he recoiled from this terrible revelation, Rodolphe added, "No, no, I have not the courage." "What have you still to inform me?"

"You will only know it too soon; but," said he, with irony, "you feel so lively an interest in the past that I ought to speak to you of events which preceded my return to France. After a long journey, I returned to Germany; I married a Prussian princess. During my absence, you had been driven away from the grand-duchy. Learning that you were married to the Comte M'Gregor, I wrote to entreat you to send me my child; you did not reply. In spite of all my efforts, I could never find out where you had sent this unfortunate child. Ten years ago only, a letter from you informed me that our child was dead. Alas! would to God that she had then been dead; I should not have known the incurable grief which henceforth will imbitter my life."

"Now," said Sarah, in a feeble voice, "I am no more astonished at the aversion with which I have inspired you, since you have read this letter. I feel it, I shall not survive this last blow. Eh bien! yes; pride and ambition have ruined me! Under the appearance of passion, I concealed a frozen heart. Not knowing what good reason you had to despise and hate me, my foolish hopes were renewed. Since we were both free again, I again believed in this prediction which promised me a crown; and when chance discovered my daughter, I seemed to see in this unhopèd-for fortune a providential design!"

"Yes; I went so far as to think that your aversion for me would yield to your love for your child; and that you would give me your hand in order to restore her to the rank which was her due."

"Well! let your execrable ambition be then satisfied and punished! Yes, notwithstanding the horror you inspire me with; yes, from attachment—what do I say? from respect for the frightful misfortunes of my child, I should have, although decided to live afterward separated from you—I should have, by a marriage which would legitimate my child, rendered her position as dazzling, as lofty as it had been miserable!"

"I was not deceived, then! Malheur! malheur! it is too late!"

"Oh! I know it; it is not for the death of your child you weep; it is the loss of that rank which you have pursued with untiring pertinacity! Well! may these infamous regrets be your last punishment!"

"The last; for I shall not survive."

"But, before you die, you shall know what has been the existence of your child since you abandoned her."

"Poor child! very miserable, perhaps!"

"Do you recollect," said Rodolphe, with terrible calmness, "do you recollect that night when you and your brother followed me to the cité?"

"I do recollect; but why this question? your look freezes me."

"On coming from this den, you saw, did you not, at the corner of the wretched streets, some unhappy creatures, who—but no, no—I dare not," said Rodolphe, concealing his face in his hands, "I dare not; my words alarm me."

"Me also—they alarm me; what is it now, mon Dieu?"

"You have seen them?" resumed Rodolphe, with an effort. You have seen them, these women, the shame of their sex? Well! among them did you remark a young girl of sixteen? beautiful, oh! beautiful as an angel; a poor child, who, in the midst of the degradation in which she had been plunged, preserved an expression so pure, so virginal, that the robbers and assassins among whom she lived, madame, had given her the name of Fleur de Marie; did you remark this young girl? speak, speak, tender mother."

"No, I did not notice her," said Sarah, almost mechanically.

"Really?" cried Rodolphe, with a burst of sardonic laughter. "It is strange. I remarked her on this occasion; listen: well, during one of the excursions of which I have spoken just now, and which then had a double object, I found myself in la cité; not far from the den whither you followed me, a man wished to beat one of those unfortunate creatures; I defended her against his brutality. You cannot guess who was this creature; speak, good and provident mother, speak! You do not guess?"

"No, I do not guess. Oh! leave me, leave me!"

"This unfortunate was Fleur de Marie."

"Oh! mon Dieu!"

"And you do not guess who was Fleur de Marie, irreproachable mother?"

"Kill me! oh! kill me!"

"She was La Goualeuse—she was your daughter," cried Rodolphe, with a heart-rending emotion. "Yes, this unfortunate, whom I had rescued from the violence of a liberated galley-slave, was my own child—mine—Rodolphe of Gerolstein's! Oh! there was something in this encounter with my child, whom I saved without knowing her, something terrible, providential; a recompense for the man who seeks to succour his fellow-men, a punishment for the parricide."

"I die cursed and condemned," murmured Sarah, falling back in her chair, and concealing her face in her hands.

"Then," continued Rodolphe, with difficulty restraining his feelings, and wishing, in vain, to suppress his sobs, which almost choked him, "when I had rescued her from the hands of her assailant, struck with the inexpressible sweetness of her voice, the angelic expression of her features, it had been impossible not to have become interested in her. With what profound emotion have I listened to the naïf and touching recital of her life of abandonment, of sorrow, and of misery; for, do you see, there have been frightful passages in the life of your daughter, madame."

"Oh! you must know the tortures that your child suffered; yes, Madame la Comtesse, while in the midst of your opulence you were dreaming of a crown, your child—your little child, covered with rags, went at night to beg in the streets, suffering with cold and hunger. During the nights of winter she shivered on a little straw in the corner of a garret, and then, when the horrible woman who abused her was tired of beating the poor little thing, only thinking how she could torture her, do you know what she did, madame? She drew out some of her teeth!"

"Oh! would that I could die! it is bitter agony."

"Listen again. Escaping at length from the hands of La Chouette, wandering without bread, without shelter, hardly eight years of age, she was arrested as a vagabond, and put in prison. Ah! these were the best days of your daughter, madame. Yes, in her prison-house, each night she thanked God that she suffered no more from cold and hunger, and was beaten no more. And it is in a prison that she has passed the most precious years of a young girl's life, those years which a tender mother always surrounds with so jealous and pious a solicitude; yes, instead of being protected with maternal care, your daughter has only known the brutal indifference of jailers; and then, one day, society, in its cruel carelessness, cast her, innocent and pure, beautiful and ingenuous, into the filth and mire of this great city. Unhappy child, abandoned, without support, without advice, delivered to all the chances of misery and vice! Oh!" cried Rodolphe, giving free vent to the sobs which overpowered him; "your heart is hardened, your selfishness cruel, but you would have wept—yes, *you* would have wept, on hearing the touching story of your child. Poor girl! sullied, but not corrupted, still chaste in the midst of this horrible degradation, which was for her a frightful dream; for each word told her horror for the life to which she was so fatally enchained. Oh! if you knew how at each moment were revealed the most adorable instincts—how much goodness—how much touching charity; yes, for it was to relieve an unfortunate more wretched than herself, the poor little thing had spent the little money she had, and which then separated her from the abyss of infamy into which she was plunged. Yes! for the day came—a frightful day—when, without work, without bread, without shelter—horrible women met her, exhausted from weakness—from hunger—and—"

Rodolphe could not finish, but cried in a heart-rending voice,

"And this was my daughter! my child!"

"Imprecations on my head!" murmured Sarah, concealing her face in her hands, as if she had feared the light of day.

"Yes," cried Rodolphe, "imprecations on you! for it is your abandonment of this child which has caused all these horrors. Maledictions on you! for when, rescuing her from this filth, I had placed her in a peaceful retreat, you had her torn away by your miserable accomplices. Maledictions on you! for this again placed her in the power of Jacques Ferrand."

At this name Rodolphe stopped suddenly. He shuddered as if he had pronounced it for the first time.

It was because he now pronounced this name for the first time since he had known that his daughter was the victim of this monster.

The features of the prince assumed then a frightful expression of rage and hatred.

Silent, immovable, he remained, as it were, crushed by this thought—that the murderer of his child still lived.

Sarah, notwithstanding her increasing weakness, was struck by his sinister look; she feared for herself.

"Alas! what is the matter with you?" she murmured, in a trembling voice. "Is it not enough of suffering? Mon Dieu!"

"No; it is not enough! it is not enough!" said Rodolphe, responding to his own thoughts. "I have never before experienced this—never! this desire for vengeance—this thirst for blood—this calm and reflecting rage! When I did not know that one of the victims of the monster was my own child, I said to myself, the death of this man will be sterile, while his life will be fertile, if, to redeem it, he accept the conditions which I impose. To condemn him to be charitable, to expiate his crimes, appeared to me just; and then, life without gold, life without sensuality, would be for him a long and double torture. But it is my child whom he has delivered to all the horrors of infamy and misery! but it is my daughter whom he has murdered! I will kill this man!"

And the prince sprang towards the door.

"Where are you going? Do not abandon me!" cried Sarah, half rising, and extending towards Rodolphe her supplicating hands. "Do not leave me alone! I am going to die!"

"Alone! no! no! I leave you with the spectre of your daughter, whose death you have caused!"

Sarah, frantic, threw herself on her knees, uttering a cry of affright, as if an alarming phantom had appeared to her.

"Pity! I die!"

"Die, then, accursed!" answered Rodolphe, frightful with rage. "Now I must have the life of your accomplice, for it is you who delivered your daughter to her executioner!"

And Rodolphe ordered himself to be rapidly driven to the house of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE AND MADNESS.

THE night closed in while Rodolphe was on his way to the notary's.

The pavilion occupied by Jacques Ferrand is buried in profound obscurity.

The wind howled.

The rain fell.

The wind howled, the rain fell also during that gloomy night, when Cécily fled forever from the house of the notary.

Extended on a bed in his sleeping apartment, feebly lighted by a lamp, Jacques Ferrand was dressed in black pantaloons and vest; one of the sleeves of his shirt was turned back, and a ligature around his attenuated arm announced that he had just been bled.

Polidori was standing near the bed, with one hand on the bolster, and appeared to regard the features of his accomplice with inquietude.

Nothing could be more hideously frightful than the face of Jacques Ferrand, who was then plunged in that torpor which ordinarily succeeds to violent attacks.

Of a mortal pallor, strongly relieved by the shadows of the alcove, his face streaming with a cold sweat, announced the last stage of consumption; his closed eyelids were so swollen and injected with blood, that they appeared like two reddish lobes in the middle of this visage of cadaverous lividity.

"One more attack like the last, and he is dead," said Polidori in a low tone, and, retiring from the bed, he commenced walking slowly up and down the room.

"Just now," he resumed, "during the attack which nearly proved fatal, I thought myself in a dream, as I heard him describe all the monstrous hallucinations which crossed his brain."

* * * * * His sense of hearing was of a sensibility so incredibly painful that, although I spoke to him as low as possible, yet it seemed to him, he said, that his head was a bell, and that an enormous clapper of brass, set in motion by the least sound, struck against it from time to time with a deafening and horrid noise."

Polidori again drew near the bed, and remained in a contemplative attitude.

The tempest raged without; it soon burst forth in violent gusts of wind and rain, which shook all the windows of the dilapidated mansion. Notwithstanding his audacious wickedness, Polidori was superstitious; dark presentiments agitated him; he felt an indefinable uneasiness; the howlings of the storm, which alone disturbed the mournful silence of the night, inspired him with an alarm against which he struggled in vain.

To drive away these gloomy thoughts, he again examined the features of his accomplice.

"Now," said he, leaning over him, "his eyelids fill with blood."

* * * * * What sufferings! how protracted! and under what varied forms! Oh!" added he with a bitter smile, "when nature becomes cruel, and plays the part of tormentor, she defies the most ferocious combinations of men."

* * * * * "Ah! this face is frightful. These frequent convulsions which overspread it contract it, and at times render it fearful."

Without, the tempest redoubled its fury.

"What a storm!" said Polidori, throwing himself into a chair, and leaning his face on his hands. "What a night! what a night! Nothing could be more fatal for the situation of Jacques."

* * * * * After a long silence Polidori resumed:

"When I think of the past, when I think of the ambitious projects which, in concert with Sarah, I founded on the youth and inexperience of the prince—how many events! by what degrees have I fallen into the state of criminal degradation in which I live! I, who had thought to effeminate this prince, and make him the docile instrument of the advancement of which I had dreamed! From preceptor I expected to become minister. And notwithstanding my learning, my mind, from misdeed to misdeed I have attained the last degree of infamy. Behold me; in fine, the jailer of my accomplice."

* * * * * "Oh, yes! the prince is without pity. Better a thousand times for Jacques Ferrand to have placed his head on the block; better a thousand times the wheel, fire, the molten lead which burns and sinks into the flesh, than the

torments this wretch endures. As I see him suffer, I begin to be alarmed for my own fate. What will they do with me—what is reserved for me, the accomplice of Jacques? To be his jailer will not suffice for the vengeance of the prince. He has not saved me from the scaffold to let me live. Perhaps an eternal prison awaits me in Germany. Better that than death. I can only place myself blindly at the discretion of the prince; it is my sole chance for safety."

At this moment the storm was at its height; a chimney, blown down by the violence of the wind, fell on the roof and into the court with a noise like thunder.

Jacques Ferrand, suddenly aroused from his state of torpor, moved on the bed. A hollow groan attracted the attention of Polidori.

"He is awakening from his stupor," said he, approaching him slowly.

"Polidori," murmured Jacques Ferrand, still stretched on the bed, and with his eyes closed: "Polidori, what is this noise?"

"A chimney has fallen down," answered Polidori in a low tone; "a frightful hurricane shakes the house to its foundations. The night is horrible, horrible!"

The notary did not hear, and half turning his head, whispered,

"Polidori, are you there?"

"Yes, yes, I am here," said Polidori in a loud voice; "but I answered softly, fearing to affect your hearing, as I did a few moments ago."

"No, now your voice reaches my ear without causing me those painful sufferings; for it seemed to me at the least noise, as if a thunderbolt had broken in my head. And yet, in the midst of all this noise, of these sufferings without name, I distinguished the voice of Cécily calling me."

"Always this infernal woman—always. But drive away these thoughts; they will kill you."

"Drive them away" cried Jacques Ferrand; "oh! never, never!"

* * * * * "What mad fury! It alarms me."

"Hold, now," said the notary, in a husky voice, with his eyes fixed on an obscure corner of the alcove. "I see already—like a form—a shape appearing—there—there."

And he pointed with his bony finger in the direction of the vision.

"Hush, be quiet, unhappy man."

"Ah! there."

"Jacques, it is death."

"Oh! I see her," added Ferrand, his teeth set. "There she is! how handsome she is! how handsome! See her long black hair; it floats in disorder upon her shoulders! And her small teeth, which are seen through her half-opened lips; her lips so red and humid! What pearls! Oh! her large eyes seem in turn to sparkle and die. Cécily! Cécily! I adore you!"

* * * * * "Jacques," cried Polidori, alarmed, "do not excite yourself by these phantoms."

"It is not a phantom."

"Take care; a short time ago, you know, you imagined also that you heard the songs of this woman, and your hearing was suddenly affected by fearful sufferings—take care!"

"Leave me," cried the notary, with impatience, "leave me! Of what use is the hearing, except to listen to her?—the sight, except to see her?"

"But the tortures which ensue, miserable fool!"

* * * * * The notary did not finish.

He uttered a sharp cry of pain, throwing himself backward on the bed.

"What is the matter?" asked Polidori, with astonishment.

"Put out that light; its glare is too vivid. I cannot support it; it blinds me!"

"How?" said Polidori, more and more surprised. "There is but one lamp with a shade, and its light is very feeble."

"I tell you that the light increases here. Hold! more! more! Oh, it is too much! it becomes intolerable!" added Jacques Ferrand, shutting his eyes with an expression of increasing pain.

"You are mad! This chamber is hardly lighted, I tell you. I have just turned down the lamps: open your eyes, you will see."

"Open my eyes! But I shall be blinded by the torrents of dazzling light which flood this apartment. Here, there, everywhere, spouts of fire—thousands of shining atoms," cried the notary, raising himself; then, uttering a cry of agony, he placed his hands on his eyes. "But I am blinded! this burning light pierces my eyelids! it consumes me! Put out that light! it casts a flame infernal."

"No more doubt," said Polidori; "his sight is stricken in the same manner as his hearing was just now. He is lost! To bleed him anew in this state would be fatal. He is lost!"

A new, sharp, terrible cry from Jacques Ferrand resounded throughout the chamber.

"Executioner! put out the lamp! Its burning splendour penetrates through my hands; they are transparent! I see the blood! it circulates in my veins! I did well to close my eyelids! this fiery lava would have entered! Oh, what torture! It is as if my eyes were pierced with red-hot needles! Help! mon Dieu! help!" cried he, struggling in his bed, a prey to horrible convulsions.

Polidori, alarmed at the violence of this attack, extinguished the light.

And both were left in utter darkness.

At this moment was heard the noise of a carriage, which stopped at the door of the street.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE VISIONS.

WHEN the chamber of Jacques Ferrand became darkened, his agony ceased by degrees, and he said to Polidori, "Why did you wait so long before you put out this lamp? Was it to make me endure all the torments of the damned? Oh, what I have suffered! Mon Dieu! how I have suffered!"

"Now do you suffer less?"

"I still experience a violent irritation, but it is nothing to what I felt just now."

"I hold to life, because the memory of Cécily is all my life."

"But this memory kills, exhausts, consumes you."

The notary did not hear his accomplice, who foresaw a new hallucination.

In effect, Jacques Ferrand resumed, with a burst of convulsive and sardonic laughter,

"To take Cécily from me! But they do not know that, by concentrating all the power of one's faculties on a single object, the imprac-

cable is gained. Thus, directly, I am going to the chamber of Cécily, where I have not dared to go since her departure. Oh, to see, to touch the vestments which have belonged to her; the glass before which she dressed—it will be to see herself! Yes; in fixing my eyes on this glass, soon shall I see Cécily appear. It will not be an illusion—a mist; it will be she; I shall find her there, as the sculptor finds the statue in the block of marble."

"Where are you going to?" said Polidori, hearing Jacques Ferrand getting up from his bed, for the most profound obscurity still reigned in the apartment.

"I go to find Cécily."

"You shall not go. The sight of her chamber will kill you."

"Cécily awaits me there."

"You shall not go—I hold you," said Polidori, seizing the notary by the arm.

Jacques Ferrand, arrived at the last stage of weakness, could not struggle against Polidori, who held him with a vigorous hand.

"You wish to prevent me from going to find Cécily?"

"Yes; and, besides, there is a lamp lighted in the next room; you know what effect the light produced just now upon your sight?"

"Cécily is there; she awaits me. I would traverse a blazing furnace to join her. Let me go. She told me I was her old tiger. Take care, my claws are sharp."

"You shall not go. I will rather tie you on your bed as a madman."

"Polidori, listen: I am not mad—I have all my reason. I know very well that Cécily is not materially there; but, for me, the phantoms of my imagination are worth more than realities."

"Silence!" cried Polidori, suddenly, listening; "just now I thought I heard a carriage stop at the door. I was not mistaken. I hear now the sound of voices in the court."

"You wish to distract my thought. The trick is too plain."

"I hear some one speak, I tell you, and I think I recognise—"

"You wish to deceive me," said Ferrand, interrupting Polidori; "I am not your dupe."

"But, wretch, listen then—listen. Ah! do you not hear?"

"Let me go—Cécily is there—she calls me. Do not make me angry, in my turn, I tell you. Take care—do you understand? take care."

"You shall not go out."

"Take care—"

"You shall not go out from here; it is my interest that you should remain."

"You prevent me from going to find Cécily; my interest wills that you should die. Hold then!" said the notary, in a hollow voice.

Polidori uttered a cry.

"Scoundrel! you have stuck me in the arm; but the wound is slight; you shall not escape me."

"Your wound is mortal. It is the poisoned dagger of Cécily which has stabbed you; I always carried it about me; await the effects of the poison. Ah! you loosen your grasp: you are going to die. You should not have hindered me from going to find Cécily," added Jacques Ferrand, feeling in the dark for the door.

"Oh!" murmured Polidori, "my arm stiffens—a mortal coldness seizes me—my knees tremble under me—my blood thickens in my veins—my head turns. Help!" cried the accomplice

of Jacques Ferrand, collecting all his strength for a last cry; "help! I die!!!"

And he sank under his own weight upon the floor. The crash of a glass door, opened with so much violence that several panes were broken to pieces, the resounding voice of Rodolphe, and a noise of hasty footsteps, seemed to respond to Polidori's cry of anguish.

Jacques Ferrand, having at length found the lock in the dark, opened the door leading into an adjoining apartment, and rushed into it, his dangerous weapon in his hand.

At the same moment, threatening and formidable as the genius of vengeance, the prince entered this room from the opposite side.

"Monster!" cried Rodolphe, advancing towards Jacques Ferrand, "it is my daughter whom you have killed! You are going—"

The prince did not finish; he recoiled alarmed. One would have said that his words had pierced Jacques Ferrand.

Throwing his poignard aside, and placing both his hands before his eyes, the wretch fell with his face to the floor, uttering a cry that was anything but human.

In consequence of the phenomenon of which we have spoken, and of which a profound darkness had suspended the action, when Jacques Ferrand entered this chamber, brilliantly lighted, he was struck with a vertigo (similar to that which we have already described), more intolerable than if he had been exposed to a torrent of light as incandescent as that of the disk of the sun.

And the agony of this man was a fearful spectacle: he writhed in frightful convulsions, tearing the floor with his nails, as if he wished to dig a hole to escape from the horrible tortures caused by this glaring light.

Rodolphe, one of his servants, and the porter of the house, who had been compelled to conduct the prince to this apartment, were transfixed with horror.

Notwithstanding his just horror, Rodolphe felt an emotion of pity for the unheard-of sufferings of Jacques Ferrand; he ordered him to be laid on a sofa. This was not done without difficulty; for, fearing to be submitted again to the direct action of the light, the notary struggled violently, but when it streamed in his face he uttered another cry.

A cry which filled Rodolphe with terror.

After protracted torments, these attacks ceased, exhausted by their own violence.

Arrived at the mortal period of his delirium, he remembered still the words of Cécily, who had called him her tiger; by degrees, his mind again wandered; he imagined himself a tiger.

Crouched in one of the corners of the room, as in his den, he thought himself a tiger; his hoarse, furious cries, the grinding of his teeth, the spasmodic contortions of the muscles of his forehead and face, his glaring look, gave him a vague and frightful resemblance to this ferocious beast.

"Tiger—tiger—tiger I am," said he in a broken voice, gathering himself up in a heap, "yes, tiger. How much blood! In my cave—corpses—torn to pieces! La Goualeuse—the brother of this widow—the child of Louise—here are corpses; my tigress Cécily shall take her share." Then, looking at his bony fingers, of which the nails had grown very long during his illness, he

added these words: "Oh! my sharp nails: an old tiger I am, but more active, and strong, and bold. No one shall dare dispute my tigress Cécily. Ah! she calls! she calls!" said he, looking around, and seeming to listen. After a moment's pause he groped his way along the wall, saying,

"No; I thought I heard her; she is not there, but I see her, oh! always, always! Oh! there she is! She calls me—she roars—she roars there I come, I come."

And Jacques Ferrand dragged himself towards the middle of the chamber on his hands and knees. Although his strength was exhausted, from time to time he advanced by a convulsive spring; then he would pause, seeming to listen attentively.

"Where is she? where is she? I approach, she flies. Ah! there; oh! she awaits me; go! go, Cécily, your old tiger is yours," cried he.

And with a desperate effort he succeeded in getting on his knees.

But suddenly falling backward with alarm, the body crouched on his heels, his hair standing on end, his look wild, his mouth distorted with terror, his hands stretched out, he seemed to struggle with rage against an invisible object, and cried in a broken voice,

"What a bite—help—my arms break—I cannot take it off—sharp teeth. No, no, oh! not the eyes—help—a black serpent—oh! its flat head—its burning eye-balls. It looks at me—it is the devil. Ah! he knows me—Jacques Ferrand—at the church—holy man—always at the church—get out—the sign of the cross—get out." And the notary, raising himself a little and sustaining himself with one hand on the floor, tried with the other to make the sign of the cross.

His livid face was covered with sweat, and all the symptoms of approaching death were manifested.

He fell immediately backward, stiff and inanimate; his eyes seemed to start from their sockets; horrible convulsions stamped his features with unearthly contortions, like those forced from dead bodies by a galvanic battery; a bloody foam inundated his lips, and the life of this monster became extinct in the midst of one of his horrid visions, for he muttered these words,

"Night—dark! dark spectres—brazen skeletons—red-hot—twine around me their burning fingers—my flesh smokes—spectre—bloody—no! no—Cécily—fire—Cécily!"

Such were the last words of Jacques Ferrand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HOSPITAL.

It will be remembered that Fleur de Marie, saved by La Louve, had been conveyed to the country house of Dr. Griffon, not far from the Island of the Ravageur.

The worthy doctor, one of the physicians of the civil hospital, where we shall conduct our readers, and who had obtained this situation through a powerful interest, regarded his "wards" as a sort of place where he experimented on the poor the treatment which he applied afterward to his rich patients, never hazarding on the last any new cures before having first tried and retried the application in *anima vili*, as he

said, with that kind of "naïve" barbarity which a blind passion for the science produces.

Thus, for example, if the doctor wished to convince himself of the comparative effect of some new and hazardous treatment, in order to be able to deduce consequences favourable to such or such a system, he took a certain number of patients,

Treated these according to the new system, Those by the ancient method ;

Under some circumstances, he abandoned others to the care of nature,

After which he counted the survivors.

These terrible experiments were, truly, a human sacrifice on the altar of science.

Dr. Griffon did not seem to think of this. In the eyes of this *prince of science* (as they phrase it) the patients of his hospital were only subjects for study and experiment ; and as, after all, there resulted sometimes from these essays in *animâ vili* a fact, or discovery useful to science, the doctor showed himself as entirely satisfied and triumphant as a general after a victory sufficiently *costly* in soldiers.

Homœopathy had never a more violent adversary than Dr. Griffon. He looked upon this method as absurd and homicidal ; thus, strong in his convictions, and wishing, as he said, to drive the homœopaths to the wall, he offered to abandon to their care a certain number of patients, on whom they might experiment to their liking. But he affirmed in advance, sure of not being contradicted by the result, that, out of twenty patients submitted to this treatment, not over five, at the outside, would survive.

The homœopaths gave the go-by to this proposition, to the great chagrin of the doctor, who regretted the loss of this occasion to prove, *by figures*, the vanity of homœopathic practice. Doctor Griffon would have been stupified if any one had said to him, in reference to this free and autocratic disposition of his subjects,

"Such a state of things would cause the barbarism of those days to be regretted when condemned criminals were exposed to undergo newly-discovered surgical operations ; operations which they dared not practice on the uncondemned. If it were successful, the condemned was pardoned.

"Compared to what you do, monsieur, this barbarity was charity.

"After all, a chance for life was thus given to a poor creature for whom the executioner was waiting, and an experiment was rendered possible which might be useful to all.

"But to try your hazardous medicaments on unfortunate artisans, for whom the hospital is the sole refuge when sickness overtakes them ; to try a treatment, perhaps fatal, on people whom poverty confides to you, trusting and powerless ; to you, their only hope ; to you, who will only answer for their life to God—do you know that this is to push the love of science to inhumanity, monsieur !

"How ! the poorer classes people already the workshops, the fields, the army ; in this world they only know misery and privations ; and when, at the end of their sufferings and fatigues, they fall exhausted—half dead—sickness even does not preserve them from a last and sacrilegious 'experiment !'

"I ask your heart, monsieur, would not this be unjust and cruel ?"

Alas ! Doctor Griffon would have been touched, perhaps, by these severe words, but not convinced.

Man is made the creature of circumstances. The captain thus accustoms himself to consider his soldiers as nothing more than the pawns of the bloody game called battle. And it is because man is thus made that society ought to protect those whom fate exposes to the action of these *humane necessities*. Now the character of Doctor Griffon once admitted (and it can be admitted without much hyperbole), the inmates of his hospital had then no guarantee, no recourse against the scientific barbarity of his experiments ; for there exists a grievous *hiatus* in the organization of the civil hospitals.

We will point it out here, so that we may be understood.

The military hospitals are each day visited by a superior officer charged to receive the complaints of the sick soldiers, and to attend to them if they appear reasonable. This "surveillance," completely distinct from the government of the hospital, is excellent ; it has always produced the best results. It is, besides, impossible to see establishments better kept than the military hospitals ; the soldiers are nursed with much care, and treated, we would say, almost with respectful commiseration.

Why not have a similar "surveillance" established in the civil hospitals, by men completely independent of the government and medical faculty ? The complaints of the poor (if they were well founded) would thus have an impartial organ, while at present this organ is absolutely wanting.

* * * * *

Thus, the doors of the hospital of Doctor Griffon once shut on a patient, he belonged, body and soul, to science. No friendly or disinterested ear can hear his griefs. He is told plainly that, being admitted out of charity, he becomes henceforth a part of the experimental domain of the doctor, and that patient and malady must serve as subjects of study, observation, analysis, or instruction, to the young students who accompany assiduously the visits of M. Griffon.

In effect, the *subject* soon had to answer to interrogations often the most painful, the most sorrowful ; and that, not to the doctor alone, who, like the priest, fulfils a duty, and has the right to know everything—no, he must reply in a loud voice before a curious and greedy crowd of students.

Yes, in this pandemonium of science, old or young, maid or wife, were obliged to abjure every feeling or sentiment of shame, and to make the most confidential communications, submit to the most material investigations, before a numerous public ; and almost always these cruel formalities aggravated their disease.

And this is neither humane nor just ; it is because the poor enter the hospital in the holy name of *charity* that they should be treated with compassion and with respect, for misfortune has its dignity.

* * * * *

On reading the following lines, it will be perceived why we have caused them to be preceded by these reflections.

* * * * *

Nothing could be more sad than the nocturnal aspect of the vast ward of the hospital, where we will introduce our readers.

Along the whole length of its gloomy walls were ranged two parallel rows of beds, vaguely lighted by the sepulchral glimmerings of a lamp suspended from the ceiling: the narrow windows were barred with iron, like those of a prison.

The atmosphere is so sickening, so filled with disease, that the new patients did not often become acclimated without danger: this increase of suffering is a kind of *premium* which every new-comer inevitably pays for—a hospital residence.

The air of this immense hall is, then, heavy and corrupted.

At intervals, the silence of night is interrupted, now by plaintive moans, now by profound sighs, uttered by the feverish sleepers: then all is quiet, and naught is heard but the regular and monotonous tickings of a large clock, which strikes the hours so long, so long for sleepless suffering.

One of the extremities of this hall was almost plunged into obscurity.

Suddenly was heard a great stir, and the noise of rapid footsteps: a door was opened and shut several times: a sister of charity, whose large white cap and black dress were visible from the light which she carried in her hand, approached one of the last beds on the right side of the hall.

Some of the patients awaking, with a start, sat up in bed, attentive to what was passing.

Soon the folding doors were opened.

A priest entered, bearing a crucifix—the two sisters knelt.

By the pale light which shone like a glory around this bed, while the other parts of the hall remained in obscurity, the almoner of the hospital was seen leaning over this couch of misery, pronouncing some words, the slow sounds of which were lost in the silence of night.

At the end of a quarter of an hour the priest took a sheet, which he threw over the bed.

Then he retired.

One of the kneeling sisters arose, closed the curtains, and returned to her prayers alongside of her companion.

Then everything became once more silent.

One of the patients had just died.

Among the women who did not sleep, and who had witnessed this mute scene, were three persons, whose names have already been mentioned in the course of this history:

Mademoiselle de Fermont, daughter of the unhappy widow ruined by the cupidity of Jacques Ferrand;

La Lorraine, the poor washerwoman, to whom Fleur de Marie had formerly given what money she had left;

And Jeanne Dupont, sister of Pique-Vinaigre, the "*conteur*" of La Force.

We know Mademoiselle de Fermont and the sister of the "*conteur*." As to La Lorraine, she was a woman of about twenty, with a sweet face, but extremely pale and thin; she was in the last stage of a consumption; there was no hope of saving her; she knew it, and was wasting away slowly.

The distance was not so great between the beds of these two women but they could speak in a low tone, and not be overheard by the sisters.

"There is another one gone," whispered La Lorraine, thinking of the dead, and speaking to herself. "She will not suffer more—she is very happy!"

"She is very happy, if she has left no children," added Jeanne.

"Ah! you are not asleep, neighbour," said La Lorraine to her. "How do you get on, for your first night here? Last night, as soon as you were brought in, you were placed in bed, and I did not dare to speak to you; I heard you sob."

"Oh! yes; I have wept much."

"You are, then, in much pain?"

"Yes, but I am used to pain; it is from sorrow I weep. At length I fell asleep; I was still sleeping when the noise of the doors awoke me. When the priest came in, and the good sisters knelt, I soon saw it was a woman who was dying; then I said to myself a *pater* and an *ave* for her."

"I also; and, as I have the same complaint as this woman had, who is just dead, I could not prevent myself from saying, 'Here is another whose sufferings are ended; she is very happy!'"

"Yes, as I told you, if she has no children."

"You have children, then?"

"Three," said the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, with a sigh. "And you?"

"I had a little girl, but I did not keep her long. I am a washerwoman at the boats; I worked as long as I could. But everything has an end; when my strength failed me, my bread failed me also. They turned me out of my lodgings; I did not know what would have become of me, except for a poor woman who gave me shelter in a cellar, where she had concealed herself to escape from her husband, who wished to kill her. There I was confined on the straw; but, happily, this good woman knew a young girl, beautiful and charitable as an angel from heaven; this young girl had a little money; she took me from the cellar, and placed me in a furnished room, paying the rent in advance, giving me, besides, a willow cradle for my child, and forty francs for myself, with some clothes."

"Good little girl! I also have met, by chance, with one who may be called her equal, a young dressmaker, very obliging. I had gone to see my poor brother, who is a prisoner," said Jeanne, after a moment of hesitation; "and I met in the '*parloir*' this young girl of whom I speak; having heard me say to my brother that I was not happy, she came to me, much embarrassed, to offer what services were in her power."

"How kind that was in her!"

"I accepted; she gave me her address, and, two days after, this dear little Mademoiselle Rigolette—she was called Rigolette—gave me employment."

"Rigolette!" cried La Lorraine.

"You know her?"

"No; but the young girl who was so generous to me, several times mentioned the name of Mademoiselle Rigolette: they were friends together."

"Eh bien!" said Jeanne, sniffing sadly, "since we are neighbours in sickness, we should be friends like our two benefactresses."

"Willingly; my name is Annette Gerbier, called La Lorraine, washerwoman."

"And mine, Jeanne Dupont, fringe-maker. Ah! it is so good, at the hospital, to be able to find some one who is not altogether a stranger, above all, when you come for the first time, and you have many troubles! But I do not wish to think of this. Tell me, La Lorraine, what was the name of the young girl who has been so kind to you?"

"She was called La Goutteuse. All my sorrow is that I have not seen her for a long time! She was as beautiful as the Holy Virgin, with fine flaxen hair and blue eyes, so sweet—so sweet! Unfortunately, notwithstanding her assistance, my poor child died at two months," and Lorraine wiped away a tear.

* * * * *

"Poor Lorraine!"

"I regret, my child, for myself, not for her, poor little dear! She would have too much to struggle with, for she soon would have been an orphan. I have not a long time to live."

"You should not have such ideas at your age. Have you been sick for a long time?"

"It will soon be three months. Dame! when I had to work for myself and my child, I increased my labour; the winter was cold, I caught a cold on my chest; at this time I lost my little girl. In watching her I forgot myself. To that add sorrow, and I am what you see me, consumptive, condemned—as was the actress who has just died."

"At your age there is always hope."

"The actress was only two years older, and you see—"

"She whom the good sisters are watching now, was she an actress?"

"Mon Dieu! yes—what is fate! She had been beautiful as day. She had plenty of money, equipages, diamonds; but, unfortunately, the smallpox disfigured her; then want came, then poverty—behold her dead in the hospital. Yet, she was not proud; on the contrary, she was kind and gentle to everybody; she told us that she had written to a gentleman whom she had known in her prosperity, and who had loved her; she wrote to him to come and reclaim her body, because it hurt her feelings to think she would be dissected—cut in pieces."

"And this gentleman—has he come?"

"No."

"Ah! it is very cruel."

"At each moment the poor woman asked for him, saying continually, 'Oh! he will come: oh! he will surely come;' and yet she is dead, and he has not come."

"Her end must have been so much the more painful."

"Oh! mon Dieu! yes; for she dreaded so much what they would do to her body."

"After having been rich, happy, to die here is sad! But as for us, it is only a change of misery."

CHAPTER IX.

THE VISIT.

"Speaking of that," resumed La Lorraine,

after a moment's hesitation, "I wish you would render me a service."

"Speak."

"If I should die, as is probable, before you leave this, I wish you would reclaim my body.—I have the same dread as the actress; and I have put aside the small amount of money I have left, so that I can be buried."

"Do not have such ideas."

"Never mind—do you promise me?"

"Yes! but, Dieu merci, that will not happen."

"But, if it does happen, I shall not have, thanks to you, the same misfortune as the actress."

"Poor lady, after having been rich, to end thus!"

"The actress was not the only one in this room who has been rich, Madame Jeanne."

"Call me Jeanne, as I call you La Lorraine."

"You are very kind."

"Who is it that has been rich besides?"

"A young person not over fifteen, who was brought here last night, before you came. She was so weak that they were obliged to carry her. The sister said that this young girl and her mother were very respectable people, who had been ruined."

"Her mother is also here?"

"No: the mother was so sick, so sick, that she could not be moved. The poor child would not leave her, and they profited by a fainting fit to bring her here. It is the proprietor of a wretched lodging-house who, from fear that they would die in his abode, applied for their admission."

"And where is she?"

"There, in the bed opposite to yours."

"And she is fifteen?"

"Mon Dieu! at the very most."

"The age of my eldest daughter!" said Jeanne, unable to restrain her tears.

"Pardon me," said La Lorraine, sadly, "pardon me, if I cause you pain, unintentionally, by speaking of your children. Perhaps they are sick also?"

"Alas! mon Dieu! I do not know what will become of them if I stay here more than eight days."

"And your husband?"

"After a pause, Jeanne answered, drying her tears, "Since we are friends together, La Lorraine, I can tell you my troubles, as you have told me yours—it will solace me. My husband was a good workman; he has become dissipated; he abandoned me and my children, after having sold all that we possessed; I worked hard; charitable people aided me; I began again to raise my head; I brought up my little family as well as I could, when my husband came back, with a bad woman, and again took all I had, leaving me to commence anew."

"Poor Jeanne! could you not prevent that?"

"I could have procured a separation by law, but the law is too dear, as my brother says. Alas! mon Dieu! you shall see what effect this has upon us poor folks: some days since, I returned to see my brother: he gave me three francs, which he had collected from those who listened to his stories in prison."

"It is plain to see that you are a kind-hearted family," said La Lorraine, who, from a rare

instinctive delicacy, did not interrogate Jeanne as to the cause of her brother's imprisonment.

"I took courage, then; I thought that my husband would not return for a long time, for he had taken from me all that he could take. No, I am mistaken," added the unhappy mother, shuddering: "there remained my daughter—my poor Catharine."

"Your daughter?"

"You shall see—you shall see. Three days since, I was at work, with my children around me; my husband came in. I saw at once that he had been drinking. 'I come after Catharine,' said he. I caught my daughter by the arm, and asked Duport, 'Where do you wish to take her?' 'That does not concern you—she is my daughter; let her tie up some clothes and follow me.' At these words, my blood curdled in my veins; for, imagine, La Lorraine, that this woman who is with my husband—it makes me shudder to say it, but—"

"Ah! yes, she is a real monster."

"Take Catharine away!" I answered, to Duport: "never!" "Tiens!" said my husband, whose lips were already white with rage, "do not provoke me, or I'll knock you down." Then he took my child by the arm, saying, 'Come with me, Catharine.' The poor little thing threw her arms around my neck; bursting into tears, she cried, 'I wish to stay with mamma!' Seeing this, Duport became furious: he tore my child from me, giving me a blow with his fist, which knocked me down; and once down—but, do you see, La Lorraine," said poor Jeanne, interrupting herself, "it is very certain he would not have been so cruel, except he had been drinking; in fine, he trampled upon me, loading me with curses."

"How bad he must be, mon Dieu!"

"My poor children fell on their knees, begging for mercy; Catharine also. Then he said to my daughter, swearing like a madman, 'If you do not come with me, I will finish the job with your mother!' I vomited blood. I felt myself half dead; but I cried to Catharine, 'Rather let him kill me! but do not follow your father!' 'Will you not be silent, then?' said Duport, giving me another blow, which made me lose all consciousness."

"What misery! what misery!"

"When I came to myself I found my two little boys beside me, weeping."

"And your daughter?"

"Gone!" cried the poor mother, sobbing convulsively; "yes, gone! My other children told me that their father had struck her, threatening to take what life I had remaining on the spot. Then, what could you expect! the poor child was bewildered; she threw herself upon me for a last embrace, kissed her little brothers, and then my husband carried her off! Ah! that bad woman waited for them at the door, I am sure!"

"And could you not complain to the '*commissaire*'?"

"At first, I could think of nothing but Catharine's departure, but I soon felt great pains all over my body. I could not walk. Alas! mon Dieu! what I had so much dreaded arrived. Yes; I had said to my brother, 'Some day my husband will beat me so hard—so hard, that I shall be obliged to go to a hospital. Then, my

children, what will become of them!' And now here I am, at the hospital, and I say, What will become of my children?"

"But is there not any justice, then, mon Dieu! for the poor?"

"Too dear! too dear for us, as my brother said," answered Jeanne Duport, with bitterness. "My neighbours went to seek the '*commissaire*;' his register came; it was painful for me to denounce Duport, but on account of my daughter it was necessary. I said only that, in a quarrel I had with him about his taking away my daughter, he had pushed me; that it was nothing, but that I wanted my daughter back again."

"And what did he reply?"

"That my husband had a right to take away his child, not being separated from me. 'You have only one way,' said the register to me: 'commence a civil suit, demand a separation of body, and then the blows which your husband has given you, his conduct with this vile woman, will be in your favour, and they will force him to deliver up your daughter; otherwise, he can keep her in his own right.' But to commence a suit! I who have not the means! Mon Dieu! I have my children to feed. 'What can I do?' said the register; 'so it is.' Yes," repeated Jeanne, sobbing, "he was right; so it is; and because that so it is, in three months, perhaps, my daughter will be a 'street-walker!' while, if I had had the means to commence a suit, it would not have happened."

"But that will never happen, your daughter must love you so much."

"But she is so young! At that age, fear, bad treatment, bad counsels, bad examples—mon Dieu! mon Dieu! Poor Catharine! so gentle, so loving! and I, who only this year wished her to renew her first communion!"

"Ah! you have much sorrow. And I complained of mine!" said La Lorraine, wiping her eyes. "And your other children?"

"On their account I did what I could to keep out of the hospital. I was obliged to give up. I vomit blood three or four times a day; I have a fever which prostrates me; I am unable to work. At least, by being cured quickly, I can return to my children, if, before this, they are not dead with hunger or imprisoned as beggars. I here—who will they have to take care of them and feed them?"

"Oh! this is terrible! You have no good neighbours, then?"

"They are as poor as I am, and they have five children of their own; thus two children more is a heavy burden; however, they have promised me to feed them a little, during eight days. It is all they can do; it is taking from them bread, of which they themselves have none too much; so I must be cured in eight days; oh yes! cured or not, I shall go out, all the same."

"But why have you not thought of this good Mademoiselle Rigolette, whom you met in prison? She would surely have taken care of them."

"I did think of her; and, although the dear little soul has, perhaps, as much as she can do to get along, I sent her word by a neighbour of my troubles. Unfortunately, she is in the country, where she is going to be married; so the portière of the house said."

"Thus, in eight days, your poor children—but no, your neighbours will not have the heart to send them away."

"But what would you have them to do? They do not eat now as much as they want, and they are obliged to take it out of the mouths of their own to give it to mine. No, no—do you see, I must be cured in eight days. I have already demanded it from all the doctors I have seen since yesterday, but they answered me, laughing, 'You must address yourself to the chief physician for that.' When will he come, La Lorraine?"

"Chut! I think he is there. We must not talk while he is making his visit," answered La Lorraine.

During the conversation of the two women the day commenced to dawn.

A confused movement announced the arrival of Dr. Griffon, who soon entered the hall, accompanied by his friend the Comte de Saint Rémy, who having, as is known, a lively interest in Madame de Fermont and her daughter, was far from expecting to find this unfortunate young girl in the hospital.

As he came into the ward, the cold and stern features of Dr. Griffon seemed to light up with a glow of satisfaction. Casting around him a look of complacency and authority, he answered with a patronising bend of the head the eager greetings of the sisters.

The rough and austere physiognomy of the Comte de Saint Rémy was stamped with deep sadness. The vanity of his attempts to discover the traces of Madame de Fermont, the ignominious conduct of the vicomte, who had preferred an infamous life to death, crushed him to the ground with sorrow.

"Eh bien!" said Doctor Griffon to the comte, with a triumphant air, "what do you think of my hospital?"

"In truth," answered M. de Saint Rémy, "I do not know why I have yielded to your desire: nothing is more heart-rending than the aspect of these wards filled with sick. Since my entrance here my feelings quite overcome me."

"Bah! bah! in fifteen minutes you will think no more about it; you, who are a philosopher, will find ample matter for observation; and then it would have been a shame that you, one of my oldest friends, should not visit the theatre of my labours—of my glory; that you should not see me at my work. All my pride is in my profession; is it wrong?"

"No, certainly not; and after your excellent care of Fleur de Marie, whom you have saved, I could refuse you nothing. Poor child! what touching charms her features have preserved, notwithstanding her dangerous illness!"

"She has furnished me with a very curious medical fact; I am enchanted with her! By-the-by, how has she passed this night? Did you see her this morning before you left Asnières?"

"No; but La Louve, who nurses her with unceasing assiduity, told me that she had slept perfectly well. Can we allow her to write to-day?"

After a moment's hesitation, the doctor answered, "Yes. As long as the subject was not completely convalescent, I feared the slightest emotion for her, the slightest application of mind; but now I do not see that any inconvenience can arise from her writing."

"At least, she could inform her friends!"

"Doubtless. Ah ça! have you heard nothing more concerning the fate of Madame de Fermont and her daughter?"

"Nothing," said M. de Saint Rémy, sighing. "My constant researches have no success. I have no more hope but in Madame la Marquise d'Harville, who, as I am told, also takes a lively interest in these unfortunates; perhaps she may have some information which might lead to her discovery. Three days ago I went to her residence; she was expected to arrive every moment. I have written to her on this subject, begging her to answer me as soon as possible."

During the conversation of M. de Saint Rémy and Doctor Griffon, several persons had slowly assembled around a large table occupying the middle of the hall; on this table was a register, where the students attached to the hospital, who might be recognised by their long white aprons, came in turn to sign their names as being present; a large number of young students arrived successively to swell the scientific cortège of Doctor Griffon, who, arriving a few moments in advance of his usual hour, waited until it struck.

"You see, my dear Saint Rémy, that my staff is quite considerable," said Doctor Griffon, with pride, pointing to the crowd who came to attend to his practical instructions.

"And these young men follow you to the bed of each patient?"

"They only come for that."

"But all these beds are occupied by women."

"Well!"

"The presence of so many men must cause them much painful confusion!"

"Ahons donc, a patient has no sex."

"In your eyes, perhaps; but in their own—modesty, shame."

"All these fine things must be left at the door, my dear Alceste; here we commence on the living experiments and studies which we finish in the dissecting room on the corpse."

"Hold, doctor: you are the best and the most honest of men; I owe you my life; I recognise your excellent qualities; but habit and the love of your profession make you view certain questions in a manner that is revolting to me. I leave you," said M. de Saint Rémy, turning to leave the hall.

"What childishness!" cried the doctor, detaining him.

"No, no—there are some things which wound me and make me indignant; I foresee that it will be torture for me to accompany you. I will not go, but I will await you here, near this table."

"What a man you are with your scruples! But I will not let you off. I admit it may be unpleasant for you to go from bed to bed; remain, then, there; I will call you for two or three cases which are very curious."

"Very well; since you are so very urgent, that will be enough, and more than enough."

The clock struck half past seven.

"Come, gentlemen," said Doctor Griffon, and he commenced his visits, followed by a numerous train.

On arriving at the first bed of the range on the right, of which the curtains were closed, the sister said to the doctor,

"Monsieur, number one died this morning, at half past four."

"So late! that surprises me; yesterday morning I would not have given her the day: has the body been claimed?"

"No, Monsieur le Docteur."

"So much the better—we can proceed with the autopsy; I can make some one happy;" then, addressing one of the students, the doctor added, "My dear Dunoyer, you have wished for a subject for a long time; you are the first on the list; this one is yours."

"Ah! monsieur, how kind you are!"

"I could wish oftener to recompense your zeal, my dear friend; but mark the subject, and take possession."

And the doctor passed on.

The student, with the aid of a scalpel, cut very delicately on the arm of the actress an F and a D, in order to take possession, as the doctor said.

"La Lorraine," whispered Jeanne Dupont to her neighbour, "who are all these people that follow the doctor?"

"They are pupils and students."

"Oh! mon Dieu! will all these young men be there when he examines me?"

"Alas! yes."

"But it is on my chest I am injured. Will they examine me before all these men?"

"Yes, yes, it must be so—they wish it. I wept enough the first time—I was dying with shame; I resisted, they threatened to turn me away; I was obliged to submit, but it affected me so much that I was worse. Judge, then, almost naked before so many people—it is very painful, *allez*."

"Before the physician alone—I comprehend that—if it is necessary—and even that costs much. But why before all these young men?"

"They are learning; they teach them with us. What would we have? we are here for that; it is on this condition that we are received here."

"Ah! I comprehend," said Jeanne Dupont, with bitterness: "they do not give us something for nothing. But yet, there are occasions where this could not be. Thus, if my poor daughter Catharine, who is but fifteen, should come to a hospital, would they dare before all these young men? Oh! no, I think I would prefer to see her die at home."

"If she came here, she would have to obey the rules, like you, like me."

"Hush, La Lorraine; if this poor demoiselle who is opposite should hear us—she who was rich, who perhaps has never before left her mother—it is going to be her turn—judge how confused and unhappy she will be."

"It is true, mon Dieu! it is true; I shudder when I think of it, poor child!"

"Silence, Jeanne, here is the doctor!" said La Lorraine.

CHAPTER X.

MADemoiselle DE FERMONT.

AFTER having rapidly visited several patients whose cases presented no great interest, the doctor at length reached the bed of Jeanne Dupont.

At the sight of this eager crowd, who, anx-

ious to see and to know, to understand and to learn, pressed around her bed, the unhappy woman, seized with a tremour of fear and shame, wrapped herself closely in the covering. The severe and intelligent face of Doctor Griffon, his penetrating look, his brow habitually contracted, his rough manner of speaking, augmented still more the alarm of Jeanne.

"A new subject!" said the doctor, casting his eye on the card where was inscribed the nature of the malady of the new-comer.

He preserved a profound silence, while his assistants, imitating the *prince of the science*, fixed their eyes on the patient with curiosity. She, to throw aside as much as possible all the painful emotions caused by so many spectators, looked steadily at the doctor, with deep anguish.

After an examination of several minutes, the doctor, remarking something anomalous in the yellowish tint of the globe of the eye, approached nearer to her, and with the end of his finger pushing back the eyelid, he examined the crystalline lens.

Then several students, answering to a kind of mute invitation of their professor, went, in turn, to observe the appearance of the eye.

Afterward the doctor proceeded to this interrogatory:

"Your name?"

"Jeanne Dupont," murmured the patient, more and more alarmed.

"Your age?"

"Thirty-six and a half."

"Louder. The place of your birth?"

"Paris."

"Your occupation?"

"Fringemaker."

"Are you married?"

"Alas! yes, monsieur," answered Jeanne, with a deep sigh.

"How long since?"

"Eighteen years."

"Have you any children?"

Here, instead of answering, the unhappy mother gave vent to her tears, for a long time restrained.

"We do not want tears, but an answer. Have you any children?"

"Yes, monsieur; two little boys and a girl."

"How long have you been sick?"

"For four days, monsieur," said Jeanne, wiping her eyes.

"Tell me how you became sick."

"Monsieur, it is that—there are so many people, I do not dare."

"Ah, ça! where do you come from, my dear!" said the doctor, impatiently. "Would you not like me to bring a confessional here? Come, speak, and be quick."

"Be composed, we are quite a family party—quite a large family, as you see," added the prince of the science, who was on that day in a gay humour. "Come, let us finish."

More and more intimidated, Jeanne said stammering and hesitating at each word, "I have had, monsieur, a quarrel with my husband, on the subject of my children; I mean to say, of my eldest daughter. He wished to take her away. I—you comprehend, monsieur—I did not wish it on account of a vile woman, who might give bad advice to my child; then my husband, who was drunk—oh! yes, monsieur, ex-

cept for that he would not have done it—my husband pushed me very hard; I fell, and—then, a short time after, I began to throw up blood.”

“Ta, ta, ta; your husband pushed you, and you fell. You set it off very nicely. He has certainly done more than push you; he must have struck you very hard in the stomach, and, what is more, several times. Perhaps, also, he has trampled you under foot. Come, answer! tell the truth.”

“Ah! monsieur, I assure you he was drunk, otherwise he would not have been so wicked.”

“Good or wicked, drunk or sober, it has nothing to do with present matters; I am not a magistrate, my good woman; I only wish to establish a fact. You have been knocked down and trampled upon, have you not?”

“Alas! yes, monsieur,” said Jeanne, bursting into tears; “and yet I have never given him cause for complaint. I work as much as I can, and I—”

“The epigastrium must be painful! you must feel a great heat there?” said the doctor, interrupting Jeanne; “you must experience lassitude, uneasiness, nausea?”

“Yes, monsieur. I only came here at the last extremity, otherwise I would not have abandoned my children, for whom I am so much worried; and then Catharine—ah! it is on her account that I fear the most. If you knew—”

“Your tongue!” said the doctor, again interrupting the patient.

This order appeared so strange to Jeanne, who had thought to excite feelings of compassion in the doctor, that she did not at first comply with it, but looked at him with amazement.

“Let us see this tongue of which you make so good use,” said the doctor, smiling; then he held down, with the end of his finger, her under jaw.

After causing the students to examine the tongue closely, in order to ascertain its colour and dryness, the doctor stepped back a moment. Jeanne, overcoming her fear, cried in a trembling voice,

“Monsieur, I am going to tell you: some neighbours, as poor as myself, have been kind enough to take charge of my children, but for eight days only. That is a great deal. At the end of this time, I must return home. Thus, I entreat you, for the love of Heaven! cure me as soon as possible—or almost cure me, so that I can get up and work. I have only eight days before me, for—”

“Face discoloured—state of prostration complete; yet the pulse hard, strong, and frequent,” said the imperturbable doctor, looking at Jeanne. “Remark it well, messieurs: oppression—heat at the epigastrium, all these symptoms certainly announce an *hématisme*, probably complicated, with hepatitis, caused by domestic sorrows, as the yellowish coloration of the globe of the eye indicates; the subject has received violent blows in the regions of the epigastrium and abdomen; the vomiting of blood is necessarily caused by some organic lesion of certain viscera. On this subject I will call your attention to a very curious point—very curious. The *post mortem* examinations of those who die with the complaint of which this subject is attacked, offer results singularly variable; often the mal-

ady, very acute and very serious, carries off the patient in a few days, and leaves no traces of its existence; at other times the spleen, the liver, the pancreas, present lesions more or less serious. It is probable that the subject before us has suffered some of these lesions; we are going, then, to try to assure ourselves of this fact, and you—you will also assure yourselves by an attentive examination of the patient.” And, with a rapid movement, Dr. Griffon, throwing the bedclothes back, almost entirely uncovered Jeanne. It is repugnant to our feelings to depict the piteous struggles of this poor creature, who wept bitterly from shame, imploring the doctor and his auditory to leave her.

But at this threat, “You will be turned out of the hospital if you do not submit to the established usages”—a threat so overwhelming for those to whom the hospital is the last resource, Jeanne submitted to a public investigation, which lasted for a long time—a very long time; for the doctor analyzed and explained each symptom, and the more studious of the assistants wished to join practice to theory, and have an ocular assurance of the state of this patient.

As a consequence of this cruel scene, Jeanne experienced an emotion so violent that she had a severe nervous attack, for which Doctor Griffon gave an additional prescription.

The visit was continued.

The doctor soon reached the bed of Mademoiselle Claire de Fermont, a victim, as well as her mother, of the cupidity of Jacques Fermand.

Mademoiselle de Fermont, wearing the linen cap furnished by the hospital, leaned her head in a languishing manner on the bolster of her bed: through the ravages of sickness could be traced, on this ingenuous and sweet face, the remains of distinguished beauty.

After a night of bitter anguish, the poor child had fallen into a kind of feverish stupor before the doctor and his scientific cortège entered the hall; thus the noise attending his visit had not yet awakened her.

“A new subject, messieurs,” said the prince of the science, running his eyes over the card which a student presented to him. “Disease, slow fever—nervous. Peste!” cried the doctor, with an expression of profound satisfaction; “if the attending physician is not mistaken in his diagnosis, it is a most excellent windfall; I have desired a slow nervous fever for a long time, as this is not a malady of the poor. These affections are caused in almost every case by serious perturbations in the social position of the subject; and it cannot be denied that the more the position is elevated, the more profound are the perturbations. It is, besides, an affection the more to be remarked from its peculiar character. It is traced back to the highest antiquity: the writings of Hippocrates leave no doubt on this subject—it is very plain; no fever, as I have said, is almost always caused by violent sorrows. Now, sorrow is as old as the world; yet, what is singular, before the eighteenth century, this malady was not described by any author; it is Huxman, who did so much honour to the profession at this epoch—it is Huxman, I say, who was the first to give a monography of the nervous fever—a monography which has become clas-

vic; and yet it was a malady of the old school," added the doctor, laughing. "Eh! eh! eh! it belongs to this grand, ancient, and illustrious *febris* family, of which the origin is lost in the night of time. But do not let us rejoice too much; let us, in effect, see if we have the happiness to possess a specimen of this curious affection. It would be doubly desirable, for I have wished for a long time to test the internal use of phosphorus—yes, messieurs," repeated the doctor, on hearing a kind of murmur of curiosity among his auditory, "yes, messieurs, phosphorus; it is a very curious experiment which I wish to make—it is bold! but *audaces fortuna juvat*—and the occasion will be excellent. We are going, in the first place, to examine if the *subject* presents on all parts of the body, and especially on the breast, this miliary eruption, so symptomatic, according to Huxman; and you will assure yourselves, by feeling the subject, of the kind of rugosity this eruption causes. But do not let us sell the skin of the bear before we bring him to the ground," added the prince of the science, who was unusually jocular.

And he slightly touched the shoulder of Mademoiselle de Fermont, to arouse her.

The young girl shuddered, and opened her large eyes, sunken by disease.

Let her terror and alarm be imagined. While a crowd of men surrounded her bed and followed her every motion with their eyes, she felt the hand of the doctor throw back the covering, and slipped into the bed in order to feel her pulse.

Collecting all her strength, with a voice of anguish and affright she cried,

"Mother! help! my mother!"

By a chance almost providential, at the moment when the cries of Mademoiselle de Fermont made the old Count de Saint Rémy start from his chair, for he recognised the voice, the door of the hall opened, and a young woman, dressed in mourning, entered precipitately, accompanied by the director of the hospital.

This woman was the Marquise d'Harville.

"In mercy, monsieur," said she to the director, with the greatest anxiety, "conduct me to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"Be good enough to follow me, Madame la Marquise," answered the director, respectfully.

"This demoiselle is at No. 17, in this hall."

"Unfortunate child! here—here!" said Madame d'Harville, wiping her eyes; "ah! it is frightful."

The marquise, preceded by the director, advanced rapidly towards the group assembled around the bed of Mademoiselle de Fermont, when these words were heard, pronounced with indignation:

"I tell you that it is murder—you will kill her, monsieur."

"But, my dear Saint Rémy, listen, then—"

"I repeat to you, monsieur, that your conduct is atrocious. I regard Mademoiselle de Fermont as my daughter. I forbid you to approach her; I will have her immediately removed hence."

"But, my dear friend, it is a case of slow nervous fever, very rare. I wish to try phosphorus. It is a unique occasion. Promise me at least that I shall take care of her. What

matters it where you take her, since you deprive my clinique of a *subject* so precious!"

"If you were not mad, you would be a monster," answered the Comte de Saint Rémy.

Clémence listened to these words with increasing anguish; but the crowd was so dense, that the director was obliged to say in a loud voice,

"Make room, messieurs, if you please—make room for Madame la Marquise d'Harville, who comes to see No. 17."

At these words, the students fell back with as much eagerness as respectful admiration, on seeing the charming face of Clémence, to which emotion had given a most lively colour.

"Madame d'Harville," cried the Comte de Saint Rémy, pushing the doctor rudely aside, and advancing towards Clémence. "Ah! it is God who sends here one of his angels! Madame, I knew that you had interested yourself for these unfortunates. More fortunate than I, you have found them; as for me, it was chance which brought me here, to behold a scene of unheard-of barbarity. Unfortunate child! Do you see, madame—do you see! And you, messieurs, in the name of your daughters, or your sisters, have pity on a child of sixteen, I entreat you; leave me alone with madame and the good sisters. As soon as she recovers a little, I will have her removed hence."

"So be it. I will sign an order for her departure; but I will follow her steps—I will cling fast to her. It is a *subject* which belongs to me, and she will do well. I will take care of her. I will not experiment with the phosphorus—well understood—I will pass the nights with her if it is necessary, as I have passed them with you, ungrateful Saint Rémy; for this fever is quite as singular as yours. They are two sisters, who have the same claim to my interest."

"Confounded man, why have you so much science?" said the comte, knowing that, in truth, he could not confide Mademoiselle de Fermont to more skilful hands.

"Eh! mon Dieu! it is very plain," whispered the doctor in his ear. "I have much science, because I experiment, because I risk and practise much on my *subjects*. Ah ça! shall I have my slow fever, old growler?"

"Yes; but can this young girl be removed?"

"Certainly."

"Then, for Heaven's sake! retire."

"Come, messieurs," said the prince of the science, "our clinique will be deprived of a precious study; but I will keep you informed of the case."

And Doctor Griffon, accompanied by his numerous attendants, continued his visit, leaving M. de Saint Rémy and Madame d'Harville with Mademoiselle de Fermont.

CHAPTER XI.

FLEUR DE MARIE.

DURING the scene which we have just described, Mademoiselle de Fermont, still in her fainting fit, was delivered to the tender care and attentions of Clémence and the sisters; one of the latter sustained the drooping head of the

young girl, while Madame d'Harville, leaning over the bed, wiped away with her handkerchief the cold sweat from the brow of the patient. Profoundly affected, M. de Saint Rémy contemplated this touching picture, when a sudden thought struck him, and he drew near Clémence, and said, in a low tone,

"And the mother of this unfortunate, madame?"

The marquise turned towards M. de Saint Rémy, and answered, with sadness,

"This child has no longer a mother, monsieur."

"Grand Dieu! dead!"

"I only learned last night, at my return, the address of Madame de Fermont, and her alarming situation. At one o'clock in the morning I was with her, accompanied by my physician. Ah! monsieur, what a picture! poverty in all its horrors—and no hope of saving the expiring mother!"

"Oh! how frightful must have been her agony, if the thought of her daughter was present!"

"Her last words were—my daughter!"

"What a death! mon Dieu! she, the tender mother—so devoted. It is terrible!"

Here one of the sisters entered, interrupting the conversation of M. de Saint Rémy and Madame d'Harville, and said to the latter,

"The young demoiselle is very feeble—she scarcely has any consciousness; in a short time she may revive. If you do not fear to remain there, madame, and wait until she comes to herself, I will offer you my chair."

"Give it to me," said Clémence, taking a seat alongside of the bed. "I will not take my eyes from her; I wish that she should, at least, see a friendly face when she recovers; then I will take her with me, since the doctor decides that she can be removed without danger."

"Ah! madame, may God bless you for what you do," said M. de Saint Rémy; "but pardon me for not having told you my name—so much sorrow! so much emotion!—I am Comte de Saint Rémy; the husband of Madame de Fermont was my most intimate friend. I live at Angers. I left that city because I was uneasy at not having received any news from these two noble and worthy women. I have since heard that they have been completely ruined."

"Ah! monsieur, you do not know all. Madame Fermont has been most cruelly despoiled!"

"By her notary, perhaps! For a moment I had such a suspicion."

"The man was a monster, monsieur! Alas! this cruel crime is not his only one. But, happily," said Clémence, thinking of Rodolphe, "he has been compelled to make restitution; and in closing the eyes of Madame Fermont I have been able to assure her that her daughter is provided for. Her death thus had fewer pangs."

"I comprehend; knowing that her daughter was under your protection, madame, my poor friend died more tranquilly."

"Not only is my protection forever secured to Mademoiselle de Fermont, but her fortune will also be restored."

"Her fortune! How! The notary—"

"Has been forced to restore her money, which he had appropriated to himself by a horrid crime!"

"A crime?"

"This man assassinated the brother of Madame Fermont, and made her believe that this unfortunate man had committed suicide, after having dissipated her fortune."

"This is horrible! it can hardly be credited; and yet I have had my doubts about this notary, for Renneville was honour itself. And this money—"

"Is deposited with a venerable priest, M. le Curé, of Bonne-Nouvelle; he will hand it to Mademoiselle de Fermont."

"This restitution is not sufficient for human justice, madame! The scaffold claims this notary, for he has not only committed one murder, but two. The death of Madame de Fermont, the sufferings which her daughter has endured on this hospital bed, have been caused by the infamous abuse of confidence of this wretch!"

"And this wretch has committed another murder, quite as frightful!"

"What do you say, madame?"

"If he made away with the brother of Madame Fermont by a pretended suicide, only a few days since he cruelly murdered a young girl, in whose destruction he was interested, by causing her to be drowned, certain that this would be attributed to accident."

M. de Saint Rémy shuddered, looked at Madame d'Harville with surprise, and thinking of Fleur de Marie, cried,

"Ah! mon Dieu! what a strange coincidence!"

"What is the matter, monsieur?"

"This young girl! Where was it he wished to drown her!"

"In the Seine, near Asnières, I am told."

"It is she! it is she!" cried M. de Saint Rémy.

"Of whom do you speak, monsieur?"

"Of the young girl this monster had an interest—"

"Fleur de Marie?"

"Do you know her, madame?"

"Poor child! I loved her tenderly. Ah! if you had known, monsieur, how beautiful she was! But how did you—"

"Doctor Griffon and myself gave her the first assistance."

"The first assistance! to her? and where?"

"At the Island of the Ravageurs, when she was saved."

"Saved! Fleur de Marie! saved!"

"By a good creature, who, at the risk of her life, drew her out of the Seine. But what is the matter, madame?"

"Ah! monsieur, I dare not believe in so much happiness. I entreat you, tell me—this young girl—describe her."

"Of admirable beauty, and an angel face—"

"Large blue eyes—flaxen hair!"

"Yes, madame."

"And when they tried to drown her, was she with an aged woman?"

"In fact, it was only yesterday she could speak. She then mentioned that an old woman accompanied her."

"God be praised!" cried Clémence, clasping her hands fervently. "I can inform him that his protégée still lives. What joy for him, who, in his last letter, spoke of this poor child with such painful regret! Pardon me, monsieur;

but if you knew how happy your information makes me, as well as another, who, still more than myself, has loved and protected Fleur de Marie! But I pray you, where is she at this moment?"

"Near Anniers, in the house of one of the physicians of this hospital—Doctor Griffon, who, notwithstanding some oddities which I deplore, has excellent qualities."

"And she is now out of danger?"

"Yes, madame; but only since two or three days. To-day she is allowed to write to her protectors."

"Oh! it is I, monsieur—it is I who will do this, or, rather, it is I who will have the joy of conducting her to those who, believing her dead, regret her so bitterly."

"I appreciate these regrets, madame; for it is impossible to know Fleur de Marie without being charmed with her angelic qualities: her grace and sweetness exercise on all those who approach her an unbounded influence. The woman who saved her, and who has since watched her night and day, as she would have watched her own child, is a courageous and devoted person, but of a temper so habitually violent, that she has been called *La Louve*—judge! Well! a word from Fleur de Marie can calm her. I have heard her sob and utter cries of despair, when, at one time, Doctor Griffon had but little hopes of saving Fleur de Marie."

"That does not astonish me—I know, *La Louve*."

"You, madame?" said M. de Saint Rémy, surprised; "you know *La Louve*!"

"It must surprise you, truly, monsieur," said the marquise, smiling sweetly, for Clémence was happy—oh! very happy—in thinking of the joyful surprise she would cause the prince. What would have been her delight, if she had known that it was a daughter whom he believed dead—that she was about to restore to Rodolphe!

"Ah! monsieur," said she to M. de Saint Rémy, "this is so joyful a day for me, that I wish it to be so for others; it seems to me that there must be many unfortunate persons here to succour; this would be an excellent way to express my gratitude, my joy, for the news you have given me." Then addressing one of the sisters, who had just given a drink to Made-moiselle de Fermont, she said, "Well, my sister, is she yet sensible?"

"Not yet, madame—she is so weak. Poor *demoiselle*! her pulse can hardly be felt."

"I will wait until she is able to be removed in my carriage. But, tell me, my sister, among all these unhappy sick, do you not know some who particularly merit my interest and pity, and to whom I can be useful before I leave the hospital?"

"Ah! madame, it is God who sends you," said the sister; "there is," added she, pointing to the bed of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre, "a poor woman, very sick, and very much to be pitied: she mourns continually about two small children, who have no one to look to for support but herself. She told the doctor just now that she would leave here, cured or not cured, in

eight days, as her neighbour had promised to take care of her children for that time only."

"Conduct me to her bed, I pray you, my sister," said Madame d'Harville, rising, and following the "*religieuse*."

Jeanne Duport, scarcely recovered from the violent attack caused by the treatment of Doctor Griffon, had not perceived the entrance of the marquise into the hospital.

What was her surprise, then, when the marquise, lifting up the curtains of her bed, said to her, with a look full of kindness and commiseration, "My good mother, you must not be any longer uneasy about your children; I will take care of them; only think of being soon cured, so that you can join them."

Jeanne Duport thought that she was in a dream. In the same place where Doctor Griffon and his students had made her submit to such a cruel ordeal, she saw a young woman of surpassing beauty come to her with words of pity, consolation, and hope.

The emotion of the sister of Pique-Vinaigre was so great that she could not utter a word; she clasped her hands as if in prayer, looking at her unknown benefactress with adoration.

"Jeanne, Jeanne," whispered *La Lorraine*, "speak to this good lady." Then addressing the marquise, she said, "Ah! madame, you save her; she would have died with despair in thinking of her poor destitute children."

"Once more reassure yourself, my good mother—have no uneasiness," repeated the marquise, pressing in her small white hand the burning one of Jeanne Duport. "Reassure yourself; be no longer uneasy concerning your children; and, if you prefer it, you shall leave the hospital to-day; you shall be nursed at home—nothing shall be wanting. In this way you shall not leave your dear children; from this time I will see that you do not want for work, and I will attend to the future welfare of your children."

"Ah! mon Dieu! what do I hear! The cherubims descend, then, from heaven, as is written in the church books," said Jeanne Duport, trembling, and scarcely daring to look at her benefactress. "Why, so much goodness for me! How have I deserved this? It cannot be possible! I leave the hospital, where I have wept so much, suffered so much! not leave my children any more! have a nurse! why, it is a miracle of the good God!"

And the poor woman spoke the truth.

If one only knew how sweet and easy it is to perform often, and at a small expense, *these miracles*! Alas! for those poor unfortunates, abandoned and repulsed on all sides—an instantaneous, unhelped-for assistance, accompanied by benevolent words of consideration, tenderly commiserative, ought it not to have, has it not, the supernatural appearance of a *miracle*?

"It is not a miracle, my good mother," answered Clémence, much affected; "that which I do for you," added she, slightly blushing at the recollection of Rodolphe, "that which I do for you is inspired by a generous being, who has taught me to relieve the unfortunate: it is he whom you must bless and thank."

"Ah! madame! I shall bless you and yours," said Jeanne Duport, weeping. "I ask your

* The marquise heard of *La Louve* when she visited St. Lazare.

pardon for expressing myself so badly. I am not accustomed to such great joy; it is the first time it has happened to me."

"Well! do you see, Jeanne," said La Lorraine, weeping, "there are also among the sick some Rigolettes and Goualeuses—on a large scale, it is true; but as to the good heart, it is the same thing!"

Madame d'Harville turned towards La Lorraine, much surprised at hearing her pronounce these two names.

"You know La Goualeuse and a young work-woman named Rigolette?" demanded Clémence of La Lorraine.

"Yes, madame. La Goualeuse—dear little angel—did last year for me—but, dame! according to her poor means—that which you do for poor Jeanne. Yes, madame—oh! it does me good to say and repeat to every one, that La Goualeuse took me from a cellar where I was confined on some straw; and the dear little angel removed me and my child to a room where there was a good bed and a cradle. La Goualeuse did this out of pure charity; for she scarcely knew me, and was very poor herself. That was very kind, was it not, madame?" said La Lorraine, excited. "Oh! yes; the charity of the poor towards the poor is holy," said Clémence, her eyes bathed in tears.

"It was just the same with Rigolette, who, according to her means," replied La Lorraine, "offered her services, a few days since, to Jeanne."

"What a singular coincidence!" said Clémence to herself, more and more affected; for each of these two names, La Goualeuse and Rigolette, recalled a noble action of Rodolphe. "And you, my child—what can I do for you?" said she to La Lorraine. "I wish the names that you have just pronounced with so much gratitude shall bring you good fortune."

"Thank you, madame," said La Lorraine, with a smile of bitter resignation. "I had a child—it is dead. I have the consumption, and am in a hopeless state. I have no longer need of anything."

"What gloomy thoughts! At your age—so young—there is always some remedy."

"Oh! no, madame, I know my fate: I do not complain. I saw a person die last night—here—with the same disease; it is an easy death. I thank you for your goodness."

"You magnify your danger."

"I am not mistaken, madame; I know it well. But since you are so kind—a great lady like you is all-powerful—"

"Speak—say, what do you wish?"

"I have asked a service of Jeanne; but since, thanks to the good God and you, she is going away—"

"Eh bien! this service—can I not render it?"

"Certainly, madame; one word from you to the sisters, or to the physician, would arrange all."

"This word? I will speak it, be assured."

"Since I have seen the actress, who is dead, so tormented by the fear of being cut up after her death, I have had the same fear. Jeanne promised to come and claim my body, and have me buried."

"Ah! it is horrible!" said Clémence, shuddering with affright. "One must come here to

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know that there are, for the poor, misery and alarms even beyond the tomb."

"Pardon, madame," said La Lorraine, timidly, "for a great lady, rich and happy as you deserve to be, this request is a very sad one: I ought not to have made it!"

"I thank you, on the contrary, my child; it teaches me a misery of which I was ignorant, and this knowledge shall not be fruitless. Be comforted; although this fatal moment may be far off, when it does arrive, you shall be sure to repose in holy ground."

"Oh! thank you, madame!" cried La Lorraine. "If I might dare to ask permission to kiss your hand."

Clémence presented her hand to the parched lips of La Lorraine.

"Oh! thank you, madame. I shall have some one to pray for and bless to the end, with La Goualeuse, and I shall be no longer sad, for after my death—"

This resignation, and these fears for beyond the tomb, had painfully affected Madame d'Harville; she whispered to the sister who came to inform her that Mademoiselle de Fermont was completely restored, "Is the condition of this young woman really desperate?"

"Alas! yes, madame: La Lorraine is given up; she has not, perhaps, eight days to live."

Half an hour afterward, Madame d'Harville, accompanied by M. de Saint Rémy, took with her, to her own house, the young orphan, from whom she had concealed the death of her mother.

The same day an agent of Madame d'Harville, after having visited, in the Rue de Barillerie, the miserable abode of Jeanne Dupont, and having received the most favourable accounts of this worthy woman, immediately hired on the Quai de l'Ecole two large rooms and a cabinet: thanks to the resources of the Temple, they were furnished in two hours, and the same evening Jeanne Dupont was removed to this dwelling, where she found her children and an excellent nurse.

The same agent was instructed to claim the body of La Lorraine, whenever she should sink under her malady, and have it decently interred.

After having installed Mademoiselle de Fermont in her apartment, Madame d'Harville set out at once for Asnières, accompanied by M. de Saint Rémy, in order to conduct Fleur de Marie to Rodolphe.

CHAPTER XII.

HOPE.

The first days of spring approached, the sun began to resume his power, the sky was pure, the air soft and mild. Fleur de Marie, leaning on the arm of La Louve, tried her strength by walking in the garden of Doctor Griffon.

The vivifying warmth of the sun and the action of walking coloured with a rosy tint the pale and thin cheeks of the Goualeuse; her peasant's costume having been torn in the agitation attending the first assistance that had

been rendered her, she wore a dress of dark-blue merino, made like a blouse, and only confined around her delicate and slender waist by a woollen girdle.

"How pleasant the sun is!" said she to La Louve, stopping at the foot of a hedge of green trees exposed to the south, and which surrounded a stone bench. "Will you sit down here a moment, La Louve?"

"Is there any need of asking me if I will?" answered the wife of Martial, shrugging her shoulders.

Then, taking from her neck a shawl of "*bourre de soie*," she folded it carefully, knelt down, laid it on the slightly damp gravel of the walk, and said to La Goualeuse,

"Place yourself there."

"But, La Louve," said Fleur de Marie, who had perceived the design of her companion too late to prevent its execution, "but, La Louve, you will ruin your shawl."

"None of your arguments! the ground is damp," said La Louve, and taking the small feet of Fleur de Marie in her hands, she placed them on the shawl.

"How you spoil me, La Louve!"

"Hum! you do not deserve it; always contending against that which I wish to do for your good. Are you not fatigued? Here is a good half hour that we have been walking. Noon has just struck at Asnières."

"I am slightly tired; but I feel that this walk has done me good."

"You see, you were tired—you could not ask me sooner to sit down?"

"Do not scold me—I did not know that I was so weak."

"It is so pleasant to walk after having been confined to the bed so long—to see the sun, the trees, the country, when one has thought never to see them again!"

"The fact is, that you have been in a very dangerous state for two days. Poor Goualeuse! Yes, now we can tell you that your life was despaired of."

"And then imagine, that on finding myself under the water, the recollection flashed across my mind that a wicked woman, who had badly treated me when I was very little, had always threatened to throw me to the fishes. Then I said to myself, 'I have no good fortune—it is fated that I shall not escape.'"

"Poor Goualeuse! was this your last thought when you supposed yourself lost?"

"Oh! no," said Fleur de Marie, warmly; "when I felt myself about to die, my last thought was of him whom I regard as my 'dieu,' so, also, when I was recalled back to life, my first thought was of him."

"It is a pleasure to confer benefits on you; you do not forget."

"Oh! no! it is so pleasant to fall asleep and dream of one's gratitude, and on awakening to remember it still!"

"Ah! one would go through fire to serve you."

"Good Louve! Hold; I assure you that one of the causes which render me desirous to live, is the hope of conferring happiness on you—of accomplishing my promise; you remember our castles in the air at Saint Lazare!"

"As to that, there is time enough; now you

are on your feet again, I have made my expenses, as Martial says."

"I hope that M. le Comte de Saint Rémy will tell me, directly, that the physician will allow me to write to Madame Georges. She must be so uneasy! And perhaps M. Rodolphe, also!" added Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes, and blushing anew at the thought of "son-dieu." "Perhaps they think me dead!"

"As those believe, also, who ordered you to be drowned, poor dear! Oh! the brigands!"

"You always suppose, then, that it was not an accident, La Louve!"

"An accident? Yes, the Martials call them accidents. When I say the Martials, it is without counting my man, for he is not of that family, no more than François and Amandine shall be."

"But what interest could any one have in my death? I have never harmed any one—no one knows me."

"It's all one, if the Martials are scoundrels enough to drown some one, they are not fools enough to do it for nothing. Some words which the widow made use of in prison, to my Martial, proves this."

"He has been to see his mother, then? this terrible woman!"

"Yes, and there is no more hope for her, nor for Calebasse, nor for Nicolas. Many things have been discovered, but this '*guez*' of a Nicolas, in the hope of saving his life, has denounced his mother and his sister for another assassination. On this account they will all be executed; the lawyers have no hope, the judges say that an example is necessary."

"Ah! it is frightful—almost a whole family!"

"Yes, unless Nicolas makes his escape; he is in the same prison with a monster of a bandit called Le Squelette, who has a plot on foot to escape. Nicolas told this to a prisoner who was discharged, and he informed Martial; for my Martial has been weak enough to go and see his '*guez*' of a brother at La Force. Then, encouraged by this visit, this wretch has had the impudence to send word to his brother that from one moment to another he might escape, and that Martial should hold himself ready, at the Père Micou's, with money, and clothes for a disguise."

"Your Martial has so kind a heart!"

"Kind heart as much as you please, La Goualeuse, but may the devil—if I let my husband aid an assassin who has wished to kill me! Martial will not denounce the plot—that is already a great deal. Besides, now that you are nearly well, La Goualeuse, we are going to start with the children on our tour through France; we will never plant our feet in Paris again; it was painful enough for Martial to be called son of the guillotined! what will it be when mother, brother, and sister are also executed!"

"You will wait, at least, until I have spoken to M. Rodolphe concerning you, if I see him again. You have become changed; I told you that I would reward you, and I wish to keep my word; otherwise how can I pay the debt I owe you? You have saved my life; and during my illness you overwhelmed me with attentions."

"Exactly; now I should seem self-interested

if I allowed you to ask anything for me from your protectors. You are saved; I repeat to you that I have made my expenses."

"Good Louve, reassure yourself; it is not you who are self-interested, it is I who am grateful."

"Listen, then!" said La Louve, suddenly rising; "it sounds like the noise of a carriage. Yes, yes, it approaches; hold! there it is; did you see it pass before the gate! there is a lady within."

"Oh! mon Dieu!" cried Fleur de Marie, with emotion; "I thought I recognised—"

"Whom?"

"A young and handsome lady whom I saw at Saint Lazare, and who was very kind to me."

"Is she aware, then, that you are here?"

"I do not know; but she is acquainted with the person of whom I have spoken, and who (if he wish, and he will, I hope) can make a reality of our Saint Lazare castles in the air."

A noise of footsteps approaching rapidly was heard behind the hedge; François and Amandine, who, thanks to the kindness of the Comte de Saint Rémy, had not left La Louve, came rushing into the garden, crying,

"La Louve, here is a fine lady with M. de Saint Rémy; they want to see Fleur de Marie at once."

"I was not mistaken," said La Goualeuse.

Almost at the same moment, M. de Saint Rémy appeared, accompanied by Madame d'Harville.

Hardly had she perceived Fleur de Marie, than she cried, running towards her and pressing her in her arms,

"Poor dear child! I see you again. Ah! saved! saved miraculously from a horrible death! With what happiness I find you—I, who, as well as your friends, thought you were lost forever!"

"I am also very happy to see you again, madame; for I have never forgotten your kindness to me," said Fleur de Marie, returning the tender caresses of Madame d'Harville with charming modesty.

"Ah! you do not know what will be the surprise, the wild joy of your friends, who, at this moment, weep for you so bitterly."

Fleur de Marie, taking the hand of La Louve, who had withdrawn a short distance, said to Madame d'Harville, presenting her,

"Since my safety is so dear to my benefactors, madame, permit me to bespeak, through you, their kindness for my companion, who saved me at the risk of her life."

"Be assured, my child; your friends will prove to the brave Louve that they know it is to her they owe the happiness of seeing you again."

La Louve, blushing, confused, daring neither to answer nor raise her eyes towards Madame d'Harville, so much did the presence of a woman of her rank abash her, could not conceal her astonishment at hearing Clémence pronounce her name.

"But there is not a moment to lose," said the marquise. "I am dying with impatience to take you with me, Fleur de Marie; I have brought in my carriage a shawl and a warm cloak; come, come, my child." Then address-

ing the comte, she added, "Will you be good enough, monsieur, to give my address to this courageous woman, so that she can come tomorrow and say farewell to Fleur de Marie? So, you will be obliged to come and see us," she said to La Louve.

"Oh! madame, I will come, very sure," answered she, "since it is to say adieu to La Goualeuse; I should be very sad not to be able to see her once more."

A few moments afterward, Madame d'Harville and La Goualeuse were on the road to Paris.

Rodolphe, after having beheld the death of Jacques Ferrand, so terribly punished for his crimes, had returned home in a state of deep dejection.

After a long and sleepless night, he had sent for Sir Walter Murphy, to confide to this old and faithful friend the heart-rending discovery concerning Fleur de Marie, that he had made the previous evening.

The worthy knight was overwhelmed; better than any other person, he could comprehend and partake of the profound grief of the prince. The latter, pale, prostrated, his eyes red from weeping, had just made to Murphy this painful revelation.

"Take courage!" said the knight, wiping his eyes; for, notwithstanding his firmness, he had also wept. "Yes, take courage, monseigneur—much courage. I offer no vain consolations—this sorrow has no cure."

"You are right. What I felt yesterday is nothing compared to my present sufferings."

"Yesterday, monseigneur, you felt the shock: but the reaction will each day be more grievous. Therefore, call up all your energy. The future is sad—very sad."

"And then, yesterday, the contempt and horror with which this woman inspired me! But may God have pity on her, for at this moment she is before him. Yesterday, in fine, surprise, hatred, fright, so many violent passions smothered within me these elements of despairing tenderness, that at present I can restrain myself no longer—I can hardly weep. And yet now, with you, I can. Hold! you see, I have no strength—I am cowardly—pardon me. Tears again—always—oh! my child! my poor child!"

"Weep, weep, monseigneur. Alas! the loss is irreparable."

"And so many dreadful miseries to make her forget," cried Rodolphe, in a touching tone, "after all that she has suffered! Think of the fate which awaited her!"

"Perhaps this transition might have been too abrupt for the unfortunate, already so cruelly tried."

"Oh! no, no! not so. If you knew with what delicacy—with what reserve, I should have apprized her of her birth; how gently I should have prepared her for this revelation—it was so simple, so easy. Oh! if this were the only question, do you see," added the prince, with a bitter smile, "I should have been composed, and not embarrassed. Throwing myself on my knees before the idolized child, I would have said, 'You, who have been until now so

cruelly treated, be at length happy—and forever happy. You are my daughter." But no," said Rodolphe, "no, that is not it—that would have been too hasty, too rash. Yes, I would have restrained myself, and said to her, in a calm manner, 'My child, I must tell you something that will astonish you much. *Mon Dieu!* yes; imagine that they have discovered traces of your parents; your father lives, and your father—I am your father.'" Here the prince again interrupted himself. "No, no; this is also too sudden, too abrupt; but it is not my fault that this revelation is always springing to my lips; one must have more self-command—you comprehend, my friend, you comprehend!" "To be there, before your daughter, and restrain your feelings!" Then, giving way again to despair, Rodolphe cried, "But to what purpose these vain words! I shall never speak to her again. Oh! that which is frightful—frightful to think of, is, that I have had my daughter near me during a whole day—yes, that day, forever accursed, on which I took her to the farm; that day, when all the treasures of her angelic mind were revealed to me in all their purity, and nothing in my heart whispered, 'She is your daughter!' nothing—nothing. Oh! how blind, stupid I was, not to imagine this. I was unworthy to be a father."

"But, monseigneur—"

"But, in truth," cried the prince, "did it not depend upon myself whether I should ever leave her? Why did I not adopt her? I, who lament so much for my child! Why, instead of sending this unfortunate child to Madame Georges, did I not keep her with me! To-day I should only have had to extend my arms to her. Why have I not done that? Why! Ah! because one only does good by halves; because one only values treasures when they have disappeared forever; because, instead of raising at once to her true level this admirable young girl, who, in spite of misery and abandonment, was, through her mind and heart, greater, nobler, perhaps, than she ever would have been by the advantages of birth and education. I thought I was doing much for her by placing her at a farm with some good people, as I would for the first interesting beggar that I met in the streets. It is my fault—it is my fault. If I had done that, she would not have been dead. Oh! yes, I am punished—I have deserved it—bad son, bad father!"

Murphy knew that such grief was inconsolable, and remained silent.

"I shall not remain here—Paris is hateful to me; to-morrow I go—"

"You are right, monseigneur."

"We will stop at the farm of Bouqueval. I will shut myself up for some hours in her chamber, where she passed the only happy days of her life. I will have collected with religious care all that belonged to her—the books she commenced to read; the paper she had written on; the clothes she has worn—all, even to the furniture—even to the tapestry of her rooms, of which I myself will take an exact delineation. And at Gerolstein, in the private park where I have raised a monument to the memory of my outraged father, I will have a small house built, in which shall be constructed this room; there I will go to weep for my daughter. Of these

two funeral monuments, one will recall my crime to my father, the other the chastisement which reached me through my child. Thus, then, let everything be prepared to-morrow morning."

Murphy, willing to try if he could not turn the price a moment from his gloomy thoughts, said, "All shall be ready, monseigneur; only you forget that to-morrow the marriage of the son of Madame Georges and Rigolette takes place. Not only have you made a provision for Germain and munificently endowed the bride, but you have also promised to be present at the wedding as a witness. Then are they to be informed of the name of their benefactor?"

"It is true, I have promised. They are at the farm, and I cannot go there to-morrow without being present at this fête, and I confess I have not the courage."

"The sight of the happiness of these young people will, perhaps, calm your sorrow."

"No, no, grief is selfish, and seeks retirement. To-morrow you will go in my place; and you will beg Madame Georges to collect everything belonging to my daughter. Let a plan of her room be made, and sent to me in Germany."

"Will you depart, monseigneur, without seeing Madame la Marquise d'Harville?"

At the name of Clémence, Rodolphe shuddered; he still cherished for her a sincere attachment, but at this moment it was, thus to speak, drowned in the wave of bitterness which inundated his heart. By a strange contradiction, the prince felt that the tender affection of Madame d'Harville would alone have aided him to support the grief which overwhelmed him, and he reproached this thought as unworthy the fervency of his paternal grief.

"I shall go without seeing Madame d'Harville," answered Rodolphe. "A few days since I wrote her how much I sorrowed for the death of Fleur de Marie. When she knows that Fleur de Marie was my daughter, she will comprehend the grief that seeks to be alone—yes, alone, so that it may be expiatory; and it is terrible, that expiation which fate imposes on me—terrible! for it commences, for me, at the time when the decline of life also commences."

Some one knocked lightly and discreetly at the door; Rodolphe made a movement of impatience; Murphy rose and went to see who was there. Through the half-open door, an aid-de-camp of the prince said a few words to the knight in a low tone. He answered by a sign, and, turning towards Rodolphe, said,

"Will monseigneur permit me to be absent for a moment? Some one wishes to speak to me on business of importance."

"Go," answered the prince.

Hardy had Murphy departed, then Rodolphe, uttering a heavy sigh, concealed his face in his hands.

"Oh!" cried he, "that which I feel alarms me. My heart overflows with hatred; the presence of my best friend weighs me down; the memory of a pure and noble love importunes and troubles me, and then—it is cowardly and unworthy. But last night I learned, with savage joy, the death of Sarah—of this unnatural mother, who has caused the death of my child."

I aroused myself in beholding the ravings and torments of the horrid monster who killed my daughter—oh madness!—I arrived too late. Yet, yesterday I did not suffer so; and yesterday, as to-day, I thought my child dead—oh! yes; but I did not say to myself these words, which henceforth will imbitter my life: I have seen my daughter; I have spoken to her; I have admired all that was adorable in her. Oh! how much time I might have passed at that farm! When I think that I only went there three times! yes, no more; and I could have gone there every day—to see my child every day! What do I say! to keep her ever with me. Oh! such shall be my punishment.”

Suddenly the door of the cabinet opened, and Murphy entered; he was very pale—so pale that the prince half arose, and cried,

“Murphy, what is the matter?”

“Nothing, monseigneur.”

“You are very pale.”

“It is—the astonishment—”

“What astonishment?”

“Madame d’Harville!”

“Madame d’Harville! Grand Dieu! some new misfortune!”

“No, no, monseigneur; reassure yourself; she is there, in the saloon.”

“She here! she in my house! it is impossible!”

“Thus, monseigneur, I tell you, the surprise—”

“Such a step on her part—but what is the matter, in the name of heaven?”

“I do not know—I cannot explain what I feel.”

“You conceal something from me.”

“On my honour, monseigneur, on my honour, no. I do not know what Madame la Marquise meant.”

“But what did she say?”

“Sir Walter, and although her voice trembled, her face was beaming with joy, ‘my presence here must surprise you very much; but there are certain circumstances so important, that they leave no time to think of appearances. Entreat his highness to grant me, immediately, an audience in your presence; for I know that the prince has no better friend. I should have begged him to come to my own house, but that would have delayed our interview for an hour, which the prince will confess should not have been retarded a moment,’ added she, with an expression which made me tremble.”

“But,” said Rodolphe, in a broken voice, and becoming still paler than Murphy, “I cannot imagine the cause of your trouble—of your emotion—of your looks; there is something else—this interview—”

“On my honour, I do not know anything more. These words alone, of the marquise, have unsettled me. Why, I am ignorant. But you yourself—you are very pale, monseigneur.”

“I!” said Rodolphe, supporting himself on a chair, for he felt his knees giving way under him.

“I tell you, monseigneur, that you are as much disturbed as I am. What is the matter?”

“Although I should die under the blow, beg Madame d’Harville to enter,” cried the prince. By a strange sympathy, the visit, so unexpected, so extraordinary, of Madame d’Harville, had

awakened in both Murphy and Rodolphe a certain vague and indefinite hope; but this hope seemed so extravagant, that neither one nor the other dared to avow it.

Madame d’Harville, followed by Murphy, entered the cabinet of the prince.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

IGNORANT, as we have said, that Fleur de Marie was the daughter of the prince, Madame d’Harville, in her joy at bringing back his protégée, had thought she would be able to present her to him without any previous preparation; she had left her in the carriage at the door, as she did not know whether the prince was willing to make himself known to the young girl, and receive her in his own house.

But perceiving the great alteration in the looks of Rodolphe, and remarking in his eyes the traces of recent tears, Clémence thought he had met with some misfortune more severe than the death of La Goualeuse; thus, forgetting the object of her visit, she cried,

“Grand Dieu! monseigneur, what is the matter?”

“Are you ignorant, madame? Ah! all hope is lost. Your haste—the interview you have so earnestly demanded—I thought—”

“Oh! I entreat you, let us not speak of the object of my visit. In the name of my father, whose life you saved, I have almost the right to demand from you the cause of the affliction in which you are plunged. Your state of dejection, your paleness, alarms me. Oh! speak, monseigneur; be generous—speak—have pity on my distress.”

“For what good, madame! my wound is incurable.”

“These words redouble my alarm, monseigneur; explain yourself, Sir Walter. Mon Dieu! what is it?”

“Eh bien!” said Rodolphe, in a hollow voice, making a violent effort to restrain himself, “since I informed you of the death of Fleur de Marie, I have learned that she was my child.”

“Fleur de Marie your child!” cried Clémence, in a tone impossible to be described.

“Yes; and just now, when you asked to see me immediately, to inform me of something that would overwhelm me with joy—have pity on my weakness—but a father, mad with grief at the loss of his child, is capable of indulging in many mad hopes. For a moment I thought—that—but no, no; I see it—I deceived myself. Pardon me; I am but a miserable, foolish man.”

Rodolphe, exhausted by the violence of his feelings, fell back in his chair, covering his face with his hands.

Madame d’Harville remained stupified, immovable, dumb, breathing with difficulty—in turn a prey to joy, to fear for the effect which the revelation she was about to make might have upon the prince—in fine, exalted by a holy gratitude towards Providence, who intrusted her—to announce to Rodolphe that his daughter lived, and she had brought her back to him.

Clémence, agitated by these emotions, so

violent, so diverse, could not utter a word. Murphy, after having for a moment partaken of the mad hopes of the prince, seemed quite as much overcome as he was. Suddenly the marquise, yielding to an unexpected and involuntary emotion, forgetting the presence of Murphy and Rodolphe, sank on her knees, clasped her hands, and cried, with an expression of fervent piety and ineffable gratitude,

"Thanks! My God! be praised! I acknowledge thy sovereign will. Thanks once more, for thou hast chosen me to inform him that his child is saved!"

Although said in a low voice, these words, pronounced in a tone of sincere and holy fervour, reached the ears of Murphy and the prince.

The latter raised his head quickly at the moment Clémence arose from the ground. It is impossible to describe the look, the gesture, the expression of Rodolphe on contemplating Madame d'Harville, whose charming features, stamped with a celestial joy, shone at this moment with superhuman beauty.

Leaning with one hand on the marble "console," and compressing with the other the rapid pulsations of her heart, she gave an affirmative nod of the head in answer to a look from Rodolphe, which once more we are unable to describe.

"Below—in my carriage."

Save the presence of Murphy, who, quick as lightning, threw himself before Rodolphe, he would have rushed at once to the street.

"Monseigneur, you would kill her!" cried the squire, holding back the prince.

"Only since yesterday she is convalescent. For her life, no imprudence, monseigneur," added Clémence.

"You are right," said Rodolphe, restraining himself with difficulty; "you are right—I will be calm—I will not see her yet—I will wait—let my first emotions be controlled. Ah! it is too much—too much in one day!" added he, in a broken voice. Then addressing Madame d'Harville, and extending his hand towards her, he cried, with a burst of inexpressible gratitude, "I am pardoned! You are the angel of mercy!"

"Monseigneur, you restored to me my father—God willed that I should bring back your child," answered Clémence. "But, in my turn, I ask your pardon for my weakness. This revelation—so sudden, so unexpected—has confused me. I confess that I have not the courage to go for Fleur de Marie—my agitation would alarm her."

"And how was she saved?" cried Rodolphe. "See my ingratitude. I have not yet asked you this question."

"At the moment she was drowning, she was rescued from a watery grave by a courageous woman."

"Do you know her?"

"To-morrow she will come to see me."

"The debt is immense," said the prince, "but I shall know how to pay it."

"What a happy circumstance, mon Dieu! that I did not bring Fleur de Marie with me," said the marquise; "this scene would have been fatal to her."

"It is true, madame," said Murphy; "it is a providential chance that she is not here."

"Now," said the prince, who had for a few moments been endeavouring to conquer his emotions; "now I have self-command, I assure you. Murphy, go and seek my daughter." These words, my daughter, were pronounced by the prince with an accent we will not attempt to express.

"Monseigneur, are you quite sure of yourself?" said Clémence. "No imprudence."

"Oh! be tranquil. I know the danger there would be for her—I will not expose her to it. My good Murphy, I entreat you—go—go!"

"Reassure yourself, madame," answered the squire, who had attentively observed the prince; "she can come. Monseigneur will restrain himself."

"Then go—go quickly, my old friend."

"Yes, monseigneur; I ask but for a moment—one is not made of iron," said the good man, wiping away the traces of his tears; "she must not see that I have been weeping."

"Excellent man!" replied Rodolphe, cordially pressing his hand.

"Come, 'allons,' monseigneur; I am ready. I did not wish to pass through the 'salon de service' all in tears, like a Magdalen. But, monseigneur, what shall I say?"

"Yes, what shall he say?" demanded the prince from Clémence.

"That M. Rodolphe wishes to see her—nothing more, it seems to me."

"Undoubtedly. Say that Monsieur Rodolphe wishes to see her—nothing more. Come, go—go."

"It is certainly the very best thing that can be said to her," answered the squire. "I will merely say that M. Rodolphe wishes to see her; that will not cause her to conjecture anything—to foresee anything: it is the most reasonable way, truly."

But Sir Walter did not stir.

"Sir Walter," said Clémence, smiling, "you are afraid."

"It is true, Madame la Marquise; in spite of my six feet and my rough exterior, I am still under the influence of violent emotions."

"My friend, take care," said Rodolphe; "wait a moment longer, if you are not sure of your self-possession."

"Allons! allons! this time, monseigneur, I am victorious," said the squire, after having passed over his eyes his Herculean hand. "Really, at my age, this weakness is perfectly ridiculous. Fear nothing, monseigneur."

And Murphy left the apartment with a firm step and tranquillized air.

A moment of silence ensued; then Clémence, blushing, remembered that she was in Rodolphe's house, and alone with him.

The prince approached her, and said, almost timidly, "If I choose this day—this moment—to make you a sincere avowal, it is because the solemnity of this day—this moment—will add still more to the gravity of the confession. Ever since I have known you I have loved you. So long as concealment of this love was necessary, I concealed it; now that you are free, and have restored me my daughter, will you be to her a mother?"

"I, monseigneur!" cried Madame d'Harville. "What say you?"

"I entreat you, do not refuse me; let this

day decide my future happiness," said Rodolphe, tenderly.

Clémence also had loved the prince for a long time; she thought she was in a dream. The avowal of Rodolphe—this avowal, at once so simple, so serious, so touching—made under such circumstances, transported her with an unhopd-for happiness; she answered, hesitatingly, "Monseigneur, it is for you to recall to mind the difference of rank—the interest of your sovereignty."

"First let me think of the interest of my heart—of that of my cherished daughter; make us both happy—oh! very happy. Permit me, who, but now was without family, to say, 'My wife—my daughter;' allow this poor child—she who was also without family—allow her to say, 'My father—my mother—my sister;' for you have a daughter who will become mine."

"Ah! monseigneur, to such noble words one can only answer by grateful tears," cried Clémence. Then, composing herself, she added, "Monseigneur, some one comes; it is your child."

"Ah! do not refuse me," cried Rodolphe, in a supplicating voice; "in the name of my love, say *our* child."

"Eh bien! *our* child," murmured Clémence; at the same moment Murphy opened the door, leading in Fleur de Marie.

The young girl, descending from the carriage of the marquise, had crossed a first antechamber, filled with footmen in grand livery; a waiting-room, where *valets de chambre* attended; then the saloon of the *huissiers*; and, finally, the "*salon de service*," occupied by a chamberlain and the aids of the prince in full uniform. Let the reader imagine the astonishment of the poor Goualeuse, who knew no other splendours than those of the farm at Bouqueval, on traversing these princely apartments, resplendent with gold, mirrors, and paintings.

As soon as she appeared, Madame d'Harville ran towards her, took her by the hand, and placing her arm around her for support, she conducted her towards the prince, who, standing near the chimney, had not been able to move.

Murphy, after having confided Fleur de Marie to the care of Madame d'Harville, hastily disappeared behind the folds of one of the immense window-curtains, finding that he was not altogether sure of his self-possession.

At the sight of her benefactor, her saviour, *her dieu*, who regarded her with silent ecstasy, Fleur de Marie, already so agitated, began to tremble.

"Compose yourself, my child," said Madame d'Harville; "there is your friend, Monsieur Rodolphe, who awaits you impatiently; he has been very uneasy about you."

"Oh! yes, very—very uneasy," said Rodolphe, still immovable, and whose heart was almost breaking at the sight of the sweet and pale face of his child.

Thus, in spite of his resolution, the prince was for a moment obliged to turn his head to conceal his emotion.

"Hold! my child, you are still very weak; sit down there," said Clémence, to turn her attention from the prince; and she led her to a large arm-chair of bronze and gilt, in which the Goualeuse seated herself. Her agitation

increased every moment: she was oppressed, speech failed her; she had not a word of gratitude for Rodolphe.

At length, on a sign from Madame d'Harville, who was leaning on the back of the chair, and holding one of Fleur de Marie's hands in her own, the prince approached softly to the other side of the seat. With more self-command, he then said to Fleur de Marie, who turned towards him her enchanting face,

"At length, my child, you are once more reunited to your friends, and forever! You never shall leave them more. Now you must forget what you have suffered."

"Yes, my child, the best way to prove that you love us," added Clémence, "is to forget the past."

"Believe me, Monsieur Rodolphe—believe me, madame, that if I do recall it sometimes, it will only be to say to myself, that, without you, I should still be very unhappy."

"Yes; but we will take care that you have no more such gloomy thoughts. Our tenderness will not leave you the time, my dear Marie," answered Rodolphe; "for you know that I gave you this name at the farm."

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe. And Madame Georges, who allowed me to call her mother, is she well?"

"Very well, my child. But I have important news to tell you."

"Me, Monsieur Rodolphe?"

"Since I have seen you, great discoveries have been made con—con—concerning your birth."

"My birth?"

"It is known who were your parents—who was your father."

Rodolphe was so much choked by his tears on his pronouncing these words, that Fleur de Marie, very much affected, turned quickly towards him: he had turned away his head.

An incident, half burlesque, diverted the attention of La Goualeuse, and prevented her from remarking more closely the emotion of her father: the worthy squire, who still remained behind the curtain, and, apparently, was very attentively looking into the garden of the hotel, could not refrain from blowing his nose with a most formidable noise, for he wept like a child.

"Yes, my dear Marie," Clémence hastened to say, "your father is known—he still lives."

"My father!" cried the Goualeuse, with an expression which put the composure of Rodolphe to a new trial.

"And some day," resumed Clémence, "very soon, perhaps, you will see him. What will doubtless surprise you very much is, that he is of high standing—noble birth."

"And my mother, madame—shall I see her?"

"Your father will answer this question, my child; but shall you not be very happy to see him?"

"Oh! yes, madame," answered Fleur de Marie, casting down her eyes.

"How much you will love him when you know him," said the marquise.

"From that day forward, a new life will commence for you—is it not so, Marie?" added the prince.

"Oh! no, Monsieur Rodolphe," answered the Goualeuse, naively. "My new life com—"

mented on the day when you took pity on me—when you sent me to the farm."

"But your father will cherish you," said the prince.

"I do not know him, and to you I owe all, Monsieur Rodolphe."

"Then you love me as much—more, perhaps, than you would love your father!"

"I bless you, and I respect you as I do God, Monsieur Rodolphe, because you have done for me that which God alone could have done," answered the Goualeuse, with enthusiasm, forgetting her habitual timidity. "When madame had the goodness to speak to me in prison, I said to her what I said to everybody—yes, Monsieur Rodolphe, to those who were very unfortunate I said, 'Hope! M. Rodolphe succours the unfortunate.' To those who hesitated between good and evil, I said, 'Courage, be virtuous; M. Rodolphe rewards those who are virtuous.' To those who were wicked, I said, 'Take care! M. Rodolphe punishes the wicked.' In fine, when I thought I was about to die, I said to myself, 'God will have mercy upon me, for M. Rodolphe has judged me worthy of his interest.'"

Fleur de Marie, carried away by her gratitude towards her benefactor, had overcome her fears; a slight carnation tinged her cheeks, and her beautiful blue eyes, which she raised towards heaven as if in prayer, shone with the softest lustre.

A silence of some seconds succeeded the enthusiastic words of Fleur de Marie; the emotion which affected the actors in this scene were profound.

"I see, my child," resumed Rodolphe, hardly containing his joy, "that in your heart I have almost taken the place of your father."

"It is not my fault, Monsieur Rodolphe. It is, perhaps, wrong in me; but, as I have told you, I know you, and I do not know my father, and," added she, holding down her head in confusion, "and then you know the past, Monsieur Rodolphe; and yet you have overwhelmed me with favours; but my father does not know it. Perhaps he will regret having found me," added the unfortunate child, shuddering; "and since he is, as madame said, of high birth, doubtless he will be ashamed—he will blush for me."

"Blush for you!" cried Rodolphe, drawing himself up proudly. "Reassure yourself, poor child; your father will place you in a position so brilliant, so lofty, that the greatest among the great of this world will regard you henceforth with the utmost respect. Blush for you! no, no; you will rank with the noblest princesses of Europe."

"Monsieur!" cried Murphy and Clémence at the same time, alarmed at the vehemence of Rodolphe and the increasing pallor of Fleur de Marie, who looked at her father with surprise.

"Blush for you!" continued he; "oh! if I ever rejoiced and felt pride in my sovereign rank, it is that, thanks to this rank, I can elevate you as much as you have heretofore been abased. Do you hear, my darling child—my beloved daughter! for it is I—it is I who am your father!"

And the prince, no longer able to conquer his emotion, threw himself at the feet of Fleur de

Marie, whom he covered with tears and caresses.

"God be praised!" cried Fleur de Marie, clasping her hands. "I am permitted to love my benefactor as much as I would have loved him. He is my father. I can cherish him without remorse. Be praised, my—"

She could not finish—the blow was too violent; Fleur de Marie fainted in the arms of her father.

Murphy ran to the door, opened it, and said,

"Doctor David instantly for his royal highness: some one is sick."

"Curses on my head! I have killed her," cried Rodolphe, in tears, kneeling before his daughter. "Marie, my child, listen to me; it is your father. Pardon—oh! pardon for not having retained this secret longer. I have killed her!"

"Calm yourself, monseigneur," said Clémence; "there is, doubtless, no danger. See, her cheeks are tinged with colour; it is the shock—only the shock."

"But hardly convalescent, she will die. Wo is me!"

At this moment, David, the black physician, entered precipitately, holding in his hands a small box filled with vials, and a paper, which he handed to Murphy.

"David, my child is dying. I have saved your life—you must save that of my child," cried Rodolphe.

Although amazed at these words of the prince, who spoke of his child, the doctor ran to Fleur de Marie, whom Madame d'Harville held in her arms, took hold of the young girl's pulse, placed his hand on her forehead, and turning towards Rodolphe, who, pale and alarmed, awaited his doom, he said,

"There is no danger, let your highness be assured."

"You speak the truth—no danger—none?"

"Not any, monseigneur. A few drops of ether, and this attack will pass over."

"Oh! thank you, David—my good David!" cried the prince, warmly. Then turning towards Clémence, Rodolphe added, "She lives—our daughter will live."

Murphy had just cast his eyes over the note which David had placed in his hand; he shuddered, and looked at the prince with affright.

"Yes, my old friend," said Rodolphe, "in a short time my daughter will say to Madame la Marquise d'Harville, 'My mother!'"

"Monseigneur," said Murphy, trembling, "the news yesterday was false."

"What do you say?"

"A violent attack, followed by a fainting fit, had caused them to think that the Comtesse Sarah was dead."

"The Comtesse!"

"This morning there are hopes of saving her."

"Oh! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" cried the prince, while Clémence looked at him with surprise, not comprehending his altered appearance.

"Monseigneur," said David, still occupied with Fleur de Marie, "there is no cause for the slightest uneasiness. But fresh air is necessary; the chair can be rolled on the terrace by opening the door of the garden; she will then soon recover."

Murphy ran immediately to open the glass door, and, aided by David, he gently rolled the chair into the garden, leaving Rodolphe and Clémence alone.

CHAPTER XIV.

DEVOTION.

"Ah! Madame," cried Rodolphe, as soon as Murphy and David had departed, "you do not know that the Comtesse Sarah is the mother of Fleur de Marie!"

"Grand Dieu!"

"I thought her dead; and what you are still ignorant of," added Rodolphe, with bitterness, "is, that this woman, as selfish as ambitious, loving me only as a prince, had, in my younger days, contrived to lead me into a marriage, which was afterward dissolved. Wishing then to marry again, the comtesse has caused all the misfortunes of her child by abandoning her to mercenary hands."

"Ah! now, monseigneur, I understand the aversion that you had for her."

"You comprehend also why she wished to win you by infamous anonymous communications! Always impelled by her implacable ambition, she thought to force me to return to her by isolating me from all endearments."

"Oh! what a wicked intention!"

"And she is not dead!"

"Monseigneur, this regret is not worthy of you."

"It is because you are not aware of all the injury she has caused! At this time, when, on finding my daughter again, I was about to give her a mother worthy of her—oh! no, no—this woman is a demon of vengeance in my path!"

"Come, monseigneur, take courage!" said Clémence, wiping away the tears which fell in spite of her; "you have a great and holy duty to fulfil. You said yourself, that henceforth the fate of your daughter should be as happy as it had been miserable; that she should be as elevated as she had been abased. For that, you must legitimate her birth; for that, monseigneur, you must espouse the Comtesse M'Gregor."

"Never—never! It would be to reward perjury, selfishness, and the mad ambition of this unnatural mother. I will acknowledge my daughter; you will adopt her, and thus, as I hoped, she will find in you maternal affection."

"No, monseigneur, you will not do that; no, you will not leave the birth of your child in the shade. The Comtesse Sarah is of a noble and ancient house; for you, doubtless, this alliance is disproportionate, but it is honourable. By this marriage, your daughter will not be legitimated, but legitimate; and thus, whatever may happen to her, she can be proud of her father, and openly acknowledge her mother."

"But to renounce you—mon Dieu! it is impossible. Ah! you do not think what happiness it would have been for me, divided between you and my child—my only love in this world."

"Your child remains to you, monseigneur: God has miraculously restored her to you. Not to be perfectly happy will be ingratitude!"

"Ah! you do not love me as I love you."

"Believe it, monseigneur, believe it; the sacrifice that you make to duty will seem to you less painful."

"But if you love me—if your regrets are as bitter as mine, you will be very unhappy. What will remain for you?"

"Charity, monseigneur! that admirable sentiment which you have awakened in my heart; that sentiment which has caused me to forget so many sorrows, and to which I am indebted for so many sweet and tender consolations."

"Pray, listen to me. Be it so: I will marry this woman; but once the sacrifice accomplished, will it be possible for me to live with her? with her who only inspires me with aversion and contempt? No, no; we shall remain forever separated; never shall she see my child. Thus Fleur de Marie will lose in you the most tender of mothers."

"But there will remain for her the most tender of fathers. By the marriage, she will be the legitimate daughter of a sovereign prince of Europe; and thus, as you have said, monseigneur, her position will be as splendid as it was obscure."

"You are without pity. I am very unhappy!"

"Dare you speak thus—you, so great, so just—you, who so nobly comprehend duty, devotion, and self-denial! A short time since, before this providential revelation, when you wept for your child with such bitter tears, if any one had said to you, 'Make one wish—one alone, and it shall be realized,' you would have cried, 'My daughter—oh! my daughter—let her live!' This is accomplished; your daughter is restored to you, and you call yourself unhappy. Ah! monseigneur, may Fleur de Marie not hear you!"

"You are right," said Rodolphe, after a long silence; "so much happiness would have been heaven upon earth; but I do not deserve that. I will do my duty. I do not regret my hesitation. I owe to it a new proof of the beauty and noble sentiments of your mind."

"This mind—it is you who have exalted and elevated it. If that which I do is well, it is you whom I praise for it. Courage, monseigneur; as soon as Fleur de Marie can stand the fatigue of travelling, take her with you. Once in Germany, in that country, so calm and grave, her transformation will be complete, and the past will only be to her a sad and distant dream."

"But you? but you?"

"I—I can well tell you that now, because I shall always say it with joy and pride: my love for you shall be my guardian angel, my saviour, my virtue, my future. Every day I will write you: pardon me this demand—it is the only one I shall make. You, monseigneur, you will reply to me sometimes, to give me news of her who, for a moment at least, I called my daughter?" said Clémence, without being able to restrain her tears; "and who shall always be so, at least in my thoughts; in fine, when time shall have given us the right openly to avow the unalterable affection which binds us—*adieu!* I swear it in the name of your daughter, if you desire it, I will go to live in Germany—in the same city with you—never more to part; and thus terminate a life which might have

been more happy, but which will have been, at least, worthy and honourable."

"Monseigneur!" cried Murphy, entering precipitately, "she whom God has restored to you has recovered her senses. Her first words were, 'My father!' She asks to see you."

A few moments after, Madame d'Harville left the hotel of the prince. He, accompanied by Murphy, the Baron de Graün, and an aid-de-camp, went in great haste to the residence of the Comtesse M'Gregor.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MARRIAGE.

SINCE Rodolphe had informed her of the murder of Fleur de Marie, the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor, overwhelmed by this revelation, which ruined all her hopes, tortured by deep remorse, had been attacked by violent nervous spasms and a frightful delirium; her wound, hardly healed, reopened, and a fainting fit of long duration had caused her attendants to suppose her dead. However, from the strength of her constitution, she did not sink under this severe attack; a new glimmering of life once more reanimated her.

Seated in an arm-chair, in order to relieve the oppression which suffocated her, Sarah, almost regretting the death from which she had just escaped, was occupied with bitter thoughts.

Suddenly Thomas Seyton entered the chamber of the comtesse; he with difficulty restrained some internal agitation; at a sign from him, her two women withdrew.

"How are you now?" said he to his sister.

"In the same state—I am very weak, and from time to time almost suffocated. Why did not God take me away from this world during my last attack?"

"Sarah," said Thomas Seyton, after a pause, "you are between life and death—a violent emotion might kill you, as it might save you."

"I have now no more emotions to experience, my brother."

"Perhaps—"

"The death of Rodolphe would find me indifferent; the ghost of my drowned daughter—drowned by my fault—is there—always there, before me. It is not an emotion—it is incessant remorse. I am really a mother now, since I no longer have a child."

"I would prefer to find in you that cold ambition which made you regard your daughter as a means to realize the dream of your life."

"The frightful reproaches of the prince have killed this ambition; the maternal sentiment is awakened in me at the picture of the extreme misery of my daughter."

"And," said Seyton, hesitating, and weighing each word, "if by chance—supposing an impossible thing—a miracle—you were informed that your daughter still lived—how would you support such a discovery?"

"I should die with shame and despair at the sight of her."

"Do not believe that—you would be too much elated with the triumph of your ambition! for, if your daughter had lived, the prince would have married you—he told you so."

"In admitting this mad supposition, it seems to me that I should not have a right to live. After having received the hand of the prince, my duty would be to deliver him of an unworthy wife—my daughter of an unnatural mother."

The embarrassment of Thomas Seyton increased every moment. Charged by Rodolphe, who was in an adjoining room, to inform Sarah that Fleur de Marie was alive, he did not know how to accomplish it. The state of the comtesse was so critical that she might expire from one moment to another; there was, then, no time to be lost in celebrating the marriage *in extremis*, which was to legitimate the birth of Fleur de Marie. For this sad ceremony, the prince had brought with him a clergyman, with Murphy and the Baron de Graün as witnesses; the Duke de Lucenay and Lord Douglass, notified in haste by Seyton, were to serve as witnesses for the comtesse, and had just arrived.

Time was pressing; but remorse, feelings of maternal tenderness, which replaced, in Sarah's heart, her merciless ambition, rendered the task of Seyton still more difficult. All his hope was that his sister deceived him or deceived herself, and that her pride would be awakened, as soon as she had gained this crown, so long and ambitiously coveted.

"My sister," said Thomas Seyton, "I am in a terrible perplexity; one word from me, perhaps, will restore you to life—perhaps will send you to your tomb."

"I have already told you that I have no more emotions to dread." "One alone, however—"

"Which?" "If it concerned your child?"

"My child is dead." "If she were not?"

"We have exhausted this supposition already. Enough, my brother—my remorse suffices."

"But if it were not a supposition! if by chance—an incredible chance—your daughter had been rescued from death; if she lived?"

"You alarm me; do not talk thus."

"Well! then, may God pardon me and judge you! she lives still."

"My daughter!"

"She lives, I tell you. The prince is here with a clergyman. I have sent for two of your friends for witnesses; the wish of your life is at length realized—the prediction is fulfilled—you are a sovereign."

Thomas Seyton had pronounced these words, fixing on his sister a look of anguish, watching for each sign of emotion.

To his great astonishment, the features of Sarah remained almost impassive: she placed her hand upon her heart, and falling back in her chair, suppressed a slight cry, which appeared to have been caused by some sudden and excruciating pain; after which her face became composed and calm.

"What is the matter, my sister?"

"Nothing—surprise—unhoped-for joy. At length my wishes are crowned."

"I was not deceived," thought Thomas Seyton. "Ambition rules—she is saved." Then addressing his sister, he said, "Eh, bien! what did I tell you?"

"You were right," replied she, with a bitter smile, divining her brother's thoughts; "ambition has once more stifled maternity within me."

"You will live! and you will love your daughter."

"I do not doubt it—I shall live—see how calm I am. Where is the prince?"

"He is here." "I wish to see him before the ceremony. My daughter—she is there, also, without doubt?"

"No; you will see her afterward."

"Now that I have the time, ask, I pray you, the prince to come."

"My sister, I do not know—but your manner is strange."

"Would you have me to laugh? Do you think satisfied ambition has a soft and tender expression! Let the prince come!"

In spite of himself, Seyton was uneasy at Sarah's calmness. For a moment he thought he saw in her eyes restrained tears; after a little longer hesitation, he opened a door, which he left open, and went out.

"Now," said Sarah, "let me but see and embrace my child, I shall be satisfied. It will be very difficult to be obtained; Rodolphe, to punish me, will refuse; but I will succeed."

Rodolphe entered, and closed the door.

"Your brother has told you all?" demanded the prince, coldly.

"All." "Your ambition is satisfied?"

"It is satisfied."

"The clergyman and the witnesses are here."

"I know it. One word, monseigneur."

"Speak, madame."

"I wish to see my daughter."

"It is impossible."

"I tell you, monseigneur, that I wish to see my child."

"She is hardly convalescent—she has been quite ill this morning; this interview might be fatal to her."

"But, at least, she will embrace her mother."

"For what purpose? You are now a sovereign."

"I am not yet, and I will not be until I have embraced my child."

Rodolphe looked at the comtesse with profound astonishment. "How!" cried he, "you subject the satisfaction of your pride—"

"To the satisfaction of my maternal tenderness: that surprises you, monseigneur?"

"Alas! yes."

"Shall I see my child?"

"But—" "Take care, monseigneur; my moments are perhaps counted. As my brother said, this crisis may save—may kill me. At this moment, I collect all my strength—all my energy, and I need them much to struggle against the shock of such a discovery. I wish to see my child, or I refuse your hand; and if I die, her birth is not legitimate."

"Fleur de Marie is not here; I should have to send for her at my house."

"Send for her at once, and I consent to all. As my moments, perhaps, are counted, I have said it. The marriage can take place while some one goes for Fleur de Marie."

"Although this feeling astonishes me, it is too praiseworthy to be disregarded. You shall see Fleur de Marie; I will write to her."

"There, on the desk where I was wounded."

While Rodolphe hastily wrote a few lines, the comtesse wiped away the icy sweat which stood upon her brow; her features now betrayed violent and concealed suffering.

His note being written, Rodolphe arose and said to the comtesse, "I will send this to my daughter by one of my aides-de-camp. She will be here in half an hour. Shall I bring with me, on my return, the clergyman and witnesses?"

"You can, or, rather, I beg you will do so. Ring—do not leave me alone."

Rodolphe rang the bell, and requested the femme de chambre who answered the summons to desire Sir Walter Murphy to come to him.

"This union is sad, Rodolphe," said the comtesse, bitterly—"sad for me. For you it will be happy, for I shall not survive it."

At this moment Murphy entered.

"My friend," said Rodolphe, "send this letter immediately by the colonel; he will bring my daughter back with him in the carriage. Beg the clergyman and witnesses to walk into the next room."

"O God!" cried Sarah, in a supplicating tone, when the squire had departed, "grant me strength enough to see her—let me not die before she arrives!"

"Ah! why have you not always been as good a mother!"

"Thanks to you, at least, I know repentance—devotion—self-denial. Yes, just now, when my brother said our child lived—let me say *our* child—I felt that I was stricken unto death. I did not tell him, but I was happy. The birth of our child would be legitimated, and I should die afterward."

"Do not speak thus."

"Ah! this time I do not deceive you—you will see."

"And no vestige remains of that implacable ambition which has ruined you! Why has fate willed that your repentance should be so late?"

"It is late, but profound—sincere; I swear it to you. At this solemn moment, if I thank God to take me from the world, it is because my life has been to you a horrible burden."

"Sarah, in mercy—"

"Rodolphe, a last prayer—your hand."

The prince, turning away his eyes, gave his hand to the comtesse, who placed it between her own.

"Ah! your hands are icy cold," cried Rodolphe with affright.

"Yes, I am dying. Perhaps, for a last punishment, God does not will that I should embrace my child."

"Oh! yes, yes, he will be touched with your remorse."

"And you, my friend—are you touched? do you pardon me? Oh! in mercy, say it. Directly, when our child shall be here—if she comes in time—you cannot pardon me before her; that would be to teach her how guilty I have been, and that you would not like. When I am once dead, what matters it to you if she love me?"

"Be comforted: she shall know nothing."

"Rodolphe, pardon! oh! pardon! Will you be without pity? Am I not sufficiently unhappy?"

"Well, may God pardon the evil you have done to your child, as I pardon what you have done to me, unhappy woman."

"You pardon me—from the bottom of your heart?"

"From the bottom of my heart," replied the prince.

The comtesse pressed the hand of Rodolphe to her dying lips in an ecstasy of joy and gratitude, and said,

"Let the clergyman come in, my friend, and tell him that afterward he must stay. I feel myself very weak."

This scene was heart-rending; Rodolphe opened the folding-doors, and the clergyman entered, followed by the witnesses.

All the actors in this sad scene were grave and sad; M. de Lucenay himself had forgotten his habitual frivolity.

The contract of marriage between the most illustrious and very puissant prince, His Royal Highness, Gustavus Rodolphus V., reigning Grand-duke of Gerolstein, and Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Comtesse M'Gregor, had been prepared by the care of the Baron de Graun; it was read by him, and signed by the bride and groom and their witnesses.

Notwithstanding the repentance of the comtesse, when the clergyman said, with a solemn voice, to Rodolphe, "Does your royal highness consent to take for wife Madame Sarah Seyton of Halsburg, Comtesse M'Gregor?" and the prince had answered "Yes" with a loud and firm voice, the death-like countenance of the comtesse brightened: a rapid and transitory expression of triumphant pride passed over her livid features; it was the last flash of the ambition which died with her.

During this sad and imposing ceremony, not a word was uttered by the witnesses. When it was finished, they all came forward, profoundly saluted the prince, and retired.

"My brother," said Sarah, in a low tone, "beg the clergyman to have the goodness to wait a moment in the adjoining room."

"How do you feel now, my sister? you are very pale."

"I am sure to live now—am I not the Grand-duchess of Gerolstein?" added she, with a bitter smile.

Remaining alone with Rodolphe, Sarah murmured, in an exhausted voice, while her features changed in an alarming manner,

"My strength is gone. I feel that I am dying—I shall never see her."

"Yes, yes, calm yourself, Sarah—you will see her."

"I have no more hope—this delay—oh! it needs a strength superhuman. My sight fails already."

"Sarah!" said the prince, approaching the comtesse, and taking her hands within his own, "she will come—now she cannot delay."

"God has not willed this last consolation."

"Sarah, listen—listen. I hear a carriage—yes—it is she; here is your child!"

"Rodolphe, you will not tell her that I was a bad mother," articulated the comtesse, slowly. The noise of a carriage resounded on the pavement of the court. The comtesse could not hear it. Her words were more and more incoherent. Rodolphe leaned over her with anxiety; he saw her eyes covered with a film.

"Pardon—my child—see my child—pardon—at least—after my death—the honour—of my—rank—" These were her last intelligible words. The fixed, pre-occupying thought of her whole life returned again, notwithstanding her sincere repentance.

At this moment Murphy entered the room.

"Monseigneur, the *Princesse Marie*—"

"No," cried Rodolphe, quickly, "let her not enter. Tell Seyton to bring the clergyman." Then, pointing at Sarah, who was gradually expiring, Rodolphe added, "God refuses her the supreme consolation of embracing her child."

Half an hour afterward, the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor had ceased to exist.

CHAPTER XVI.

BICÊTRE.

FIFTEEN days had passed since Rodolphe, by marrying the Comtesse Sarah M'Gregor in *extrema*, had legitimated the birth of *Fleur de Marie*.

It was the day of the "*mi-carême*." This date being established, we will conduct the reader to Bicêtre. This immense establishment, founded, as every one knows, for the treatment of the insane, serves also as a place of refuge for seven or eight hundred poor old men, who are admitted when they have reached the age of seventy, or are afflicted with any very serious infirmity.

On arriving at Bicêtre, the visitor enters at first a vast court planted with large trees, and divided into grass-plots, ornamented in summer with flower borders. Nothing could be more cheerful, more peaceful, or more salubrious than this promenade, which was specially designed for the indigent old men of whom we have spoken. It surrounds the buildings, in which, on the first floor, are found the spacious "*dortoirs*," or sleeping apartments; and on the ground floor, the dining halls, kept in admirable order, where the pensioners of Bicêtre eat, in common, most excellent food, prepared with great care, thanks to the paternal solicitude of the directors of this establishment.

To enumerate completely the different purposes for which this institution is designed, we mention that, at the time of which we speak, the condemned prisoners were brought here after their sentence. It was, then, in one of the cells of this house that the widow Martial and her daughter Calebasse awaited the moment of their execution, which was fixed for the next day. Nicolas, Le-Squelette, and several other scoundrels, had succeeded in making their escape from La Force.

We have already said that nothing could be more cheerful than the approach to this edifice, when, on coming from Paris, one entered it by the court of the poor.

Thanks to a forward spring, the elms and the lindens were already beginning to shoot forth their leaves; the large plots of grass were of a luxuriant growth; here and there the flower beds were enamelled with crocuses, primroses, and the lively-coloured anemones. The sun was shining brightly, and the old pensioners, dressed in gray coats, were walking up and down, or seated on the benches: their placid countenances expressed calmness, or a kind of tranquil indifference.

Eleven o'clock had just struck, when two

carriages stopped before the outer gate: from the first descended Madame Georges, Germain, and Rigolette; from the second, Louise Morel and her mother.

Germain and Rigolette had been married fifteen days. We will leave the reader to imagine the saucy gaiety, the lively happiness, which shone in the blooming visage of the grisette, whose rosy lips were only opened to smile or embrace Madame Georges, whom she called her mother.

The features of Germain expressed a felicity more calm, more reflecting, more grave; there was mingled with it a feeling of profound gratitude, almost of respect, towards this noble and excellent girl, who had offered him in prison consolations so sustaining and delightful, which Rigolette did not seem to recollect the least in the world; thus, as soon as her *petit Germain* turned the conversation on this subject, she spoke of something else, saying these recollections made her sad. Although she had become Madame Germain, and Rodolphe had settled on her forty thousand francs, Rigolette had not been willing (and her husband was of the same opinion) to change her grisette cap for a hat. Certainly, never had humility served better an innocent coquetry; for nothing could be more becoming, more elegant, than her little cap with flat "*barbes*," a little "*à la paysanne*," ornamented on each side with rosettes or orange colour, which contrasted well with her shining black hair, now worn in long ringlets, since she had the time to put them in paper; around her charming neck she wore a richly-embroidered collar and a scarf of French cashmere of the same shade as the ribands of her cap, which half concealed her fine person; and although she wore no corset, according to her usual custom, her robe of "*taffetas mauve*" showed not the slightest wrinkle on her slender figure. Madame Georges contemplated her son and Rigolette with quiet happiness.

Louise Morel, after a rigid examination and autopsy of her child, had been set at liberty; the beautiful features of the daughter of the lapidary expressed a kind of sad and melancholy resignation. Thanks to the generosity of Rodolphe, and the care and attention which he had caused to be shown her, the mother of Louise Morel, who accompanied her, had recovered her health. The porter at the gate had asked Madame Georges whom she desired to see; she replied that one of the physicians of the asylum for the insane had made an appointment with her and her friends at eleven o'clock. Madame Georges had the option either to wait for the doctor in an office which was pointed out to her, or in the court of which we have spoken. She chose the latter; leaning on the arm of her son, and continuing to converse with the wife of the lapidary, she walked in the garden, Louise and Rigolette following at a short distance.

"How happy I am to see you, dear Louise!" said the grisette. "Just now, when we went to seek you in the Rue du Temple on our arrival from Bouqueval, I wished to go up and see you; but my husband did not wish it, saying it was high up; I waited in the hack. Your vehicle followed ours, so that I now see you for the first time since—"

"Since you came to see me in prison. Ah!

Mademoiselle Rigolette," cried Louise, "what a kind heart! what—"

"In the first place, my good Louise," said the grisette, interrupting gayly the daughter of the lapidary, in order to escape her thanks, "I am no more Mademoiselle Rigolette, but Madame Germain. I do not know if you are aware of it, and I hold to my title."

"Yes, I knew you were married. But let me thank you again—"

"That of which you are most completely ignorant, my good Louise," replied Madame Germain, again interrupting the daughter of Morel, in order to change the course of her ideas; "that of which you are ignorant is, that I am married, thanks to the generosity of him who has been our providence—mine as well as yours!"

"M. Rodolphe! Oh! we bless him every day! When I came out of prison, the lawyer whom he sent to see me told me that (owing to M. Rodolphe, who had already done so much for us) M. Ferrand," and the poor creature shuddered, "M. Ferrand, to make amends for his cruelties, had settled some money on my father and me—my poor father, who is still here, but who, thanks to God, gets better and better."

"And who will return with us to-day to Paris, if the hopes of the worthy doctor are realized."

"May God grant it!"

"He will grant it. Your father is so good and honest! I am sure that we will take him back with us. The doctor thinks that now a great effort must be made, and that the unexpected presence of several persons whom your father was accustomed to see almost daily before he lost his reason, may effect a cure. As for me, in my poor judgment, it appears certain."

"I dare hardly believe it, mademoiselle."

"Madame Germain—Madame Germain, if it is all the same to you, my good Louise. But to return to what I was speaking about: you do not know who M. Rodolphe is?"

"He is the providence of the unfortunate!"

"It is true; and what then? you do not know. Eh bien! I am going to tell you." Then addressing her husband, who was walking near her, Rigolette cried, "Do not go so fast, *mon ami*—you fatigue our good mother; and, besides, I prefer to have you nearer to me."

Germain turned around, lessening his pace a little, and smiled on Rigolette, who playfully threw him a kiss.

"How genteel he is, my little Germain! is he not, Louise? With that air so '*distingué*!' such a fine figure! was I not right when I found him more to my liking than M. Girandean, the travelling clerk, or M. Cabrion? Ah! *mon Dieu*! speaking of Cabrion—M. Pipelet and his wife, where are they, then? The doctor said they ought to come also, because your father often pronounces their names."

"They will not long delay. When I left the house, they had been gone for a long time."

"Oh! then they will not fail to be here; for M. Pipelet is as punctual as a clock. But let us return to my marriage and to M. Rodolphe. Only think, Louise, it was he who sent me with the order for Germain's release. You can imagine our joy on leaving that dreadful prison!"

We reached my room, and there, aided by Germain, I arranged a slight repast, but a repast for real gourmands. It is true, it was of no great use to us, for when we had finished, we had neither of us eaten anything—we were too happy. At eleven o'clock Germain went away; we agreed to meet the next morning. At five o'clock I was up and at work, for I was two days behindhand. At eight o'clock some one knocked; I opened; who should come in but M. Rodolphe. At once I began to thank him from the bottom of my heart for what he had done for Germain; he would not let me finish. 'My neighbour,' said he to me, 'Germain will soon be here; give him this letter. You and he will take a hack, and go at once to a little village called Bouqueval, near Ecouen, on the St. Denis road. Once there, you will ask for Madame Georges; and I wish you much pleasure.' 'Monsieur Rodolphe, I am going to tell you it will be another day lost, and, without any reproach, this will make three.' 'Reassure yourself, my neighbour; there is some work for you at Madame Georges', whom you will find an excellent customer.' 'If this is so, very good, Monsieur Rodolphe.' 'Adieu, my neighbour.' 'Adieu, and thank you, my neighbour.' He went, and Germain arrived. I told him what had occurred; M. Rodolphe could not deceive us; we got into a carriage, as frolicsome as children—we, who were so sad the day previous. Well! we arrive. Ah! my good Louise—hold! in spite of myself the tears will come to my eyes. This Madame Georges, whom you see before us, is the mother of Germain."

"His mother!"

"Mon Dieu! yes, his mother, from whom her child had been carried off when quite young, and whom she had no hope of ever seeing again. You can imagine their happiness. After Madame Georges had wept much, and embraced her son, it was my turn. M. Rodolphe had written many fine things about me, for she told me, as she held me in her arms, that she knew of my conduct towards her son. 'And if you wish, my mother,' said Germain, 'Rigollette shall be your daughter also.' 'If I wish it, my children! with all my heart. I know you will never find a better or a nicer little wife.' Behold me, then, installed in a fine farm with Germain, his mother, and my birds, which I sent for, poor little things, so that they should be of the party. Although I do not like the country, the days passed so quickly, that it was like a dream; I only worked for my pleasure; I assisted Madame Georges, I walked with Germain, I sang, I jumped; it was enough to make one crazy. At length our marriage was fixed for two weeks ago yesterday. Two days previous, who should arrive in a fine carriage but a large, fat, bald gentleman, with a very good-natured look, who brought me from M. Rodolphe a '*corbeille de mariage*.' Just imagine, Louise, a large box of rose-wood, with these words written in gold on a plate of blue enamel: '*Industry and Virtue, Love and Happiness*.' I opened the box; what did I find! some small lace caps like the one I have on, dress patterns, jewels, gloves, this scarf, a beautiful shawl; in fine, it was like a real fairy tale."

"It is true, it is like a real fairy tale; but,

do you see, to have been so good, so industrious, has brought you happiness."

"As to being good and industrious, my dear Louise, I have not been so purposely; it has so happened: so much the better for me. But this is not all: at the bottom of the box I discovered a handsome portfolio, with these words, '*Le voisin à sa voisine*.' I opened it: there were two packages, one for Germain, the other for me; in Germain's I found a paper, which named him director of a Bank for the Poor, with a salary of 4000 francs; in the envelope directed to me, there was a draught for 40,000 francs on the—on the Treasury; yes, that is it: this was my marriage portion. I wished to refuse it, but Madame Georges, who had talked with the tall, bald gentleman and with Germain, said to me, 'My child, you can, you ought to accept it; it is the recompense of your virtue, your industry, and of your devotion to those who suffer; for it is only by depriving yourself of your usual hours for repose, at the risk of making yourself sick, and thus losing your sole means of subsistence, that you have been able to go and console your unfortunate friends.'"

"Oh! that is very true," cried Louise; "there is no one else like you, at least, Madame!—Madame Germain."

"Very good! I told the bald gentleman that what I had done was my pleasure; he answered, 'No matter; M. Rodolphe is immensely rich; your marriage portion on his part is a testimony of esteem and friendship; your refusal would cause him great sorrow; he will be present at your marriage, and will force you to accept.' What happiness that so much wealth should be in the possession of a person as charitable as M. Rodolphe!"

"Doubtless he is very rich, but if that were all—"

"Ah! my good Louise, if you only knew who Monsieur Rodolphe is! and I made him carry my bundles! But patience! you shall see. The evening before the marriage, very late, the bald gentleman arrived, having travelled post. M. Rodolphe could not come; he was indisposed; but the tall gentleman came in his place. It is only then, my good Louise, that we were informed that your benefactor, that ours, was—guess what? a prince!"

"A prince!"

"What do I say, a prince! a royal highness, a reigning grand-duke, a king on a small scale. Germain explained this to me."

"M. Rodolphe!"

"Hein! my poor Louise! And I had asked him to help me wax my floor!"

"A prince—almost a king! That is the reason he has so much power to do good."

"You comprehend my embarrassment, my good Louise. Thus, seeing that he was almost a king, I did not dare refuse my marriage portion. We were married. Eight days afterward, M. Rodolphe sent word to us and Madame Georges, that he would be very happy if we would make him a bridal visit; we went. Dame! you comprehend, my heart beat fast; we arrived at the Rue Plumet; we entered a palace; we passed through saloons filled with

* The neighbour to his neighbour.

servants in livery, gentlemen in black, wearing silver chains around their necks and swords at their sides, and officers in uniform; and then gildings everywhere, almost enough to blind you. At length we found the bald gentleman in a saloon with some other messieurs, all laced over with embroidery; he introduced us into a large room, where we found M. Rodolphe—that is to say, the prince, dressed very plainly, and looking so kind, so frank, so little proud—in fine, *he looked so much like the M. Rodolphe of old times*, that I felt myself at once at my ease, recalling to my mind that I had made him fasten my shawl, mend my pens, and give me his arm in the streets."

"You were no longer afraid? Oh! as for me, how I should have trembled!"

"Eh bien! I, no. After having received Madame Georges with great kindness, and offered his hand to Germain, the prince said to me, smiling, 'Well, my neighbour, how are *Papa Crétu* and *Ramonette*?' (these are the names of my birds; how kind in him to remember them). 'I am sure,' he added, 'that now you and Germain rival with your joyous songs those of your little birds!' 'Yes, monseigneur' (Madame Georges had taught us to say that while we were on the road)—'yes, monseigneur, our happiness is great, and it seems to us more sweet because we owe it to you.' 'It is not to me you owe it, my child, but to your excellent qualities and to those of Germain,' and so forth, and so forth: I pass over the rest of his compliments. Finally, we left this good nobleman with our hearts rather full, for we shall see him no more. He told us that he would return to Germany in a few days; perhaps he has already gone; but gone or not, we shall always remember him."

"Since he has subjects, they must be very happy!"

"Judge! he has done so much good to us, who are nothing to him. I forgot to tell you that it was at this farm where we live that one of my old prison companions resided, a very good little girl, who, to her happiness, had also met M. Rodolphe; but Madame Georges had recommended me not to speak about it to the prince; I do not know wherefore; doubtless because he does not like that any one should speak to him of the good he does. What is certain is, that it appears this dear Goualeuse has found her parents, who have taken her with them, very far away: all I regret is, not to have embraced her before her departure."

"*Allons!* so much the better," said Louise, bitterly; "she is happy also—she—"

"My good Louise, pardon me—I am selfish; I only speak to you of happiness, and you have yet so many reasons for sorrow."

"If my child had lived," said Louise, sadly, "that would have consoled me; for now where is the virtuous man who would have me, although I have money?"

"On the contrary, Louise, I say that none but a virtuous man can comprehend your position; yes, when he knows all, when he shall know you, he can but pity you, esteem you; and he will be sure to have in you a good and worthy wife."

"You say that to console me."

"No, I say that because it is true."

"Well, true or not, it does me good, and I thank you. But who comes here? Hold! it is M. Pipelet and his wife! Mon Dieu, how pleased he is! he who formerly was always so miserable on account of the jokes of M. Cabrion."

M. and Madame Pipelet came forward joyfully; Alfred, always wearing his unremovable "*chapeau tromblon*," had on a magnificent coat of grass-green in all its pristine lustre; his cravat, with embroidered corners, just allowed room for a formidable shirt collar, which concealed the half of his cheeks; a large waistcoat, of a deep-yellow ground, with brown stripes; black pantaloons, rather short; stockings of dazzling whiteness, and well-brushed shoes, completed his attire.

Anastasia strutted in a robe of amaranth-coloured merino, over which showed to great advantage a shawl of deep blue. She proudly displayed to all eyes her periwig, freshly curled, and had her cap suspended from her arm by strings of green riband, like a "reticule."

The physiognomy of Alfred, ordinarily so grave, so collected, and latterly so much cast down,* was beaming, rejoicing, sparkling; as soon as he saw Louise and Rigolette at a distance, he ran towards them, crying in his bass voice,

"Delivered—gone!"

"Ah! mon Dieu! Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, "how very gay you look! what is the matter?"

"Gone, mademoiselle, or, rather, madame, do I, can I, ought I to say, for now you are exactly like Anastasia, thanks to the '*conjungo*,' just as your husband, M. Germain, is exactly like me."

"You are very kind, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, smiling; "but who has gone, then?"

"Cabrion!!" cried M. Pipelet, respiring and inhaling the air with inexpressible satisfaction, as if he had been relieved from an enormous weight.

"He leaves France forever—forever—for perpetuity—in fine, he is gone."

"You are very sure of it?"

"I have seen him, with my own eyes, get into a diligence for Strasbourg—he and his trunks, and all his effects—that is to say, a hat-box, a maulstick, and a box of colours."

"What is he singing about there, the old darling!" said Anastasia, arriving out of breath, for she had with difficulty followed the quick movements of Alfred. "I bet he is talking to you of Cabrion! he has done nothing but repeat it over and over again all along the way."

"That is to say, Anastasia, that I could hardly keep on the ground. Before, it seemed to me that my hat was lited with lead; now, one would say that the air raised me towards the firmament! gone—at last—gone!!! and he will never return more!"

"Most happily, the '*gredin*'!"

"Anastasia, spare the absent; happiness renders me merciful; I will simply say that he was an unworthy blackguard."

"And how did you know that he had gone to Germany?" asked Rigolette.

"By a friend of my prince of lodgers. Apropos of this dear man, you do not know, thanks

* A small bag.

to his good recommendations, that Alfred is appointed '*concierge-gardiën*' of a '*Mont de Pitié*' and of a Bank for the Poor, established in our house by a good soul that I cannot help thinking must be the person for whom M. Rodolphe was the *travelling clerk* in good actions!"

"That happens very well," said Rigolette: "it is my husband who is the director of this bank, for which he is also indebted to the recommendation of M. Rodolphe."

"And '*a-l-l-l-ez donc*,'" cried Madame Pipelet, gayly; "so much the better! so much the better! old faces are preferable to new ones. But to return to Cabrion: just imagine that a tall, fat, bald gentleman, on coming to inform us of Alfred's appointment as guardian, asked us if a painter of much talent, named Cabrion, had not lived with us. At the name of Cabrion, there was my old darling lifting his boot in the air, and already half dead. Happily, the great fat, bald man added, 'This young painter is about to start for Germany; a wealthy person sends him there for some work which will employ him several years; perhaps he may always remain there.' As a proof of what he said, the individual gave to my old darling the date of the intended departure of Cabrion and the address of the '*Messageries*;* and I had the unhopèd-for happiness to read on the register, '*M. Cabrion, artist painter, leaves for Strasbourg and outward in conformity.*' The departure was fixed for this morning."

"I went to the office with my wife."

"We saw the '*gredin*' mount on the imperial, alongside of the conductor."

"And just at the moment the diligence started Cabrion perceived me, recognised me, turned round, and cried, '*I go forever — yours for life!*' Happily, the trumpet of the conductor almost drowned these last words and the indecent familiarity of his address, which I despise; for, at last, God be praised, he is gone."

"And gone forever, believe it, Monsieur Pipelet," said Rigolette, restraining a violent desire to laugh. "But what you do not know, and what will astonish you very much, is, that M. Rodolphe was—"

"Well?"

"A prince in disguise—a royal highness."

"Come, get along—what a farce!" said Anastasia.

"I swear it to you by my husband," said Rigolette, very seriously.

"My prince of lodgers, a royal highness!" cried Anastasia. "*Allez donc!*" And I asked him to take care of my lodge! Pardon—pardon—pardon." And she mechanically put on her cap, as if this head-dress were more suitable when she was speaking of a prince.

By a manifestation diametrically opposed as to form, but quite similar as to the reality, Alfred, contrary to his habit, uncovered his head entirely, and saluted the air profoundly, crying, "A prince! a highness in our lodge! And he has seen me between the sheets when I was in bed, in consequence of the indignities of Cabrion!" At this moment Madame Georges turned round, and said to her son and to Rigolette,

"My children, here is the doctor."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAÎTRE D'ÉCOLE.

DOCTOR HERBIN, a man of ripe age, had a physiognomy very intellectual and "*distingué*," a look of remarkable sagacity and depth of thought, and a smile of extreme goodness. His naturally harmonious voice became full of kindness when he spoke to the lunatics; thus the suavity of his tone and the benevolence of his words seemed often to calm the natural irritability of these unfortunate people. He was among the first to substitute, in his treatment for madness, commiseration and benevolence, for the terrible coercive means employed formerly; no more chains, no more blows, no more shower-baths; above all (save in some few cases), no more solitary confinement.

His lofty understanding had comprehended that monomania, insanity, and madness were increased by confinement and abusive treatment; that, on the contrary, by allowing the patients to live together, a thousand distractions, a thousand incidents occurring at each moment, prevented them from being absorbed in a fixed idea, so much the more fatal as it is more concentrated by solitude and intimidation.

Thus experience proves that solitary confinement is as fatal to lunatics as it is salutary to criminals; the mental perturbation of the former increases in solitude, while the perturbation, or, rather, moral corruption of the latter, is augmented and becomes incurable by the society of their brothers in crime.

Doubtless, some years hence, the penitentiary system, with its prisons in common (true schools of infamy), with its galleys, its chains, its pillories, and its scaffolds, will appear as corrupt, as savage, as atrocious as the old method of treatment for the insane appears to us of the present day.

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges to M. Herbin, "I thought I might be allowed to accompany my son and daughter-in-law, although I do not know M. Morel. The situation of this excellent man appeared to me so interesting that I have not been able to conquer my desire to assist with my children in attempting his complete restoration to reason, which, you hope (so we have been told), will be accomplished by the means you are about using."

"I count much, madame, on the favourable impression which the presence of his daughter and persons whom he has been accustomed to see will produce upon him."

"When they came to arrest my husband," said the wife of Morel, with emotion, showing Rigolette to the doctor, "our good little neighbour was occupied in assisting me and my children."

"My father also well knew M. Germain, who has always been very kind to us," added Louise. Then noticing Alfred and Anastasia, she added, "Monsieur and madame are the porters of our house; they have also assisted us as much as they could in our misfortunes."

"I thank you, monsieur," said the doctor to Alfred, "for having inconvenienced yourself by coming here; but, from what I have been told, I see this visit has not cost you a great deal."

"Monsieur," said M. Pipelet, with a grave in-

* Offices of the diligence.

salutation of the head, "man should assault man here below; he is a brother, without counting that the Pere Morel was the cream of honest men; before he lost his reason, in consequence of his arrest and that of his dear Louise."

"And over and above all," said Anastasia, "I regret always that the porringer full of scalding soup which I threw on the backs of the two bailiffs had not been melted lead."

"It is true; and I ought to render this just homage to the affection which my wife has inspired to the Morels."

"If you do not fear, madame," said Doctor Herbin, to the mother of Germain, "the sight of the lunatics, we will pass through several courts in order to reach the exterior building, where I have had Morel conducted; for I have given orders this morning that he should not be led to the farm as usual."

"To the farm, monsieur?" said Madame Georges; "is there a farm here?"

"Does that surprise you, madame? I can conceive it. Yes, we have here a farm cultivated by the lunatics, and its produce is very valuable to the house."

"Do they work there without restraint, monsieur?"

"Yes; and the labour, the quiet of the fields, the sight of nature, are among the best of our remedies. A single keeper conducts them thither, and there is hardly an instance of escape; they go with evident satisfaction, and their slight earnings serve to meliorate their condition. But here we are at the door of one of the courts." Then, seeing a slight shade of apprehension on the face of Madame Georges, the doctor added, "Fear nothing, madame; in a few moments you will feel as secure as I do."

"I follow you, monsieur. Come, my children."

"Anastasia," whispered M. Pipelet, who was behind with his wife, "when I think that if the infernal conduct of M. Cabrion had lasted, your Alfred would have become mad, and, as such, would have been confined among these unfortunates whom we are going to see, clothed in costumes the most singular, chained by the middle of their bodies, or shut up in cages like the wild beasts of the garden of plants!"

"Do not speak of it, old darling! It is said that those who are mad for love are like real apes when they see a woman: they throw themselves against the bars of their cages, uttering the most frightful cooings. Their keepers are obliged to soothe them with great blows from a whip, and by letting fall on their heads immense quantities of water, which drops from a hundred feet high, and that is not a bit too much to refresh them."

"Anastasia, do not approach too near to the cages of these madmen," said Alfred, gravely: "an accident happens so quickly!"

"Yes, not to say a word of how ungenerous it would be on my part to have the appearance of defying them; for, after all," added Anastasia, with a melancholy sigh; "it is our attractions which make them distracted. Hold! I shudder, my Alfred, when I think that, if I had refused you your happiness, you would be, at this moment, crazy from love, like some of these madmen; that you would cling to the bars of your cage the moment you saw a woman,

and roar afterward, poor old thing! You who, on the contrary, run away as soon as they attempt to allure you."

"My modesty is suspicious, it is true; but, Anastasia, the door opens—I shudder. We are going to see abominable figures, hear the noise of chains and grinding of teeth."

Monsieur and Madame Pipelet, not having heard the conversation of Doctor Herbin, partook of the popular prejudice which still exists on the subject of insane hospitals; prejudices which, forty years ago, were not without foundation.

The door of the court was opened.

This court, forming a long parallelogram, was planted with trees and furnished with benches; a gallery of elegant construction extended on each side: cells, well ventilated, opened on this gallery; some fifty men, uniformly clothed in gray, were walking, talking, or sitting silent and contemplative in the sun.

On the arrival of Doctor Herbin, a large number of lunatics pressed around him, extending their hands to him with a touching expression of confidence and gratitude, to which he cordially replied, saying to them,

"Good-day, good-day, my children."

Some of these unfortunate beings, at too great a distance from the doctor for him to take their hand, came and offered it with a kind of hesitation to the persons who accompanied him.

"Good-day, my friends," said Germain, kindly, shaking hands in a manner which seemed to delight them.

"Monsieur," said Madame Georges to the doctor, "are these the lunatics?"

"These are about the most dangerous in the house," said the doctor, smiling. "We leave them together in the daytime, but at night they are locked up in the cells, of which you see the doors open."

"How! these people are completely mad! But are they ever furious?"

"At first—at the commencement of their malady, when they are brought here; then, by degrees, the treatment begins to produce its effect, and the sight of their companions calms them and distracts their attention; gentle usage appeases them, and their violent attacks, at first frequent, become more and more rare. Hold! here is one of the most violent."

This was a robust and powerful man of about forty years of age, with long, black hair; high forehead, sallow complexion, intellectual expression, and most intelligent countenance. He approached the doctor, and said to him, in a tone of exquisite politeness, although slightly constrained,

"Monsieur le Docteur, I ought, in my turn, to have the right of conversing and walking with the blind man; I have the honour of observing to you that there is flagrant injustice in depriving this unfortunate man of my conversation, to deliver him" (and the madman smiled with bitter disdain) "to the stupid incoherencies of an idiot, who is completely a stranger (I hazard nothing in saying it)—completely a stranger to the least notions of any science whatever, while my conversation might divert the attention of the blind man. Thus," added he, with extreme volubility, "I would have told him my opinion on the isothermal and orthog-

nal superficies, causing him to observe that the equations of partial differences, of which the geometrical explanation is summed up in two orthogonal superficies, cannot generally be integral on account of their complication. I should have proved to him that the united superficies are all necessarily isothermal, and together we would have sought what superficies are capable of composing a trebly isothermal system. If I do not deceive myself, monsieur, compare this recreation with the stupid nonsense with which they entertain this blind man," added the lunatic, taking breath, "and tell me, is it not a pity to deprive him of my conversation?"

"Do not take what he has just said, madame, for the wanderings of a madman," whispered the doctor; "he handles in this way sometimes the most difficult questions of geometry or astronomy, with an acuteness which would do honour to the most illustrious savans." His knowledge is great. He speaks all the living languages, but he is, alas! a martyr to his thirst for erudition and pride of learning. He imagines that he has absorbed all human knowledge, and that, by retaining him here, humanity is thrown back into the darkness of the most profound ignorance."

The doctor replied aloud to the lunatic, who seemed to await his reply with a respectful anxiety,

"My dear Monsieur Charles, your complaint appears to me very just, and this poor blind man, who, I believe, is dumb, but, happily, is not deaf, will have great delight in the conversation of a man as learned as you are. I will see that you have justice done you."

"Besides, by retaining me here, you deprive the universe of all human knowledge, which I have appropriated to myself by assimilation," said the madman, becoming animated by degrees, and commencing to gesticulate with great violence.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my good Monsieur Charles; happily, the world has not yet discovered its deficiencies: as soon as it shall have become enlightened in this respect, we shall endeavour to supply its wants; and in that case, a man of your capacity, of your learning, can always render great services."

"But I am for science what Noah's ark was for physical nature," cried he, grinding his teeth, his eye looking very wild.

"I know it, my dear friend."

"You wish to put the light under the bushel!" cried he, clenching his fists. "But then I will break you like glass," added he, with a threatening air, his face purple with anger, and the veins swelling like cords.

"Ah! Monsieur Charles," answered the doctor, fixing on the madman a calm, piercing, steady look, and assuming a caressing and flattering manner, "I thought that you were the greatest savant of modern times."

"And past," cried the madman, forgetting all at once his anger in his pride.

"You did not let me finish: that you were the greatest savant of time past, present—"

"And future," added the madman, proudly.

"Oh! the great babbler, who always interrupts me," said the doctor, smiling, and striking him amicably on the shoulder. "Can it be

said that I am ignorant of all the admiration that you inspire and deserve! Come, let us go and see the blind man."

"Conduct me to him." Doctor, you are a good man; come, come, you will see what he is obliged to listen to when I can tell him such fine things," answered the lunatic, completely calmed, walking before the doctor with a satisfied air.

"I confess to you, monsieur," said Germain, who had drawn near to his wife, remarking her fear when the madman spoke and gesticulated so violently, "I confess to you, for a moment I feared a crisis."

"Ah! mon Dieu! monsieur, formerly, at the first word of excitement, at the very first sign of a threat, the keepers would have seized, tied, beat, and inundated him with a shower-bath, one of the most atrocious tortures that ever were invented. Judge of the effect of such a treatment on an energetic and irritable temperament, whose force of expansion becomes more violent as it is more compressed. Then he would have fallen into one of those frightful fits of madness which defy the most powerful restraint; exasperated by their frequency, they become almost incurable; while, as you see, by not restraining at first this momentary ebullition, or in turning it aside by the aid of the excessive mobility of mind which is to be remarked among many lunatics, these experimental bubblings are assuaged as soon as they are raised."

"And who is this blind man of whom he speaks? is it an illusion of his mind?" asked Madame Georges.

"No, madame, it is a very strange history," answered the doctor. "This blind man was taken in a den in the Champs Elysées, where they arrested a band of robbers and assassins; he was found chained in the middle of a subterranean cavern, alongside of the corpse of a woman, so horribly mutilated, that she could not be recognised."

"Ah! it is frightful," said Madame Georges, shuddering.*

"This man is frightfully ugly; his face has been burned with vitriol. Since his arrival here, he has not spoken a single word. I do not know whether he is really dumb, or only affects to be so. By a singular chance, the only attacks he has had have occurred during my absence, and always at night. Unfortunately, all the questions that have been addressed to him have been unanswered, and it is impossible to obtain any information as to his situation; his attacks seem to be caused by a madness of which the cause is impenetrable, for he does not pronounce a word. The other lunatics pay him great attention; they guide his footsteps, and they like to entertain him, alas! according to their degree of intelligence. Hold! here he is!"

All the persons who accompanied the doctor recoiled with horror at the sight of the Maître d'Ecole, for it was he. He was not mad, but he pretended to be both mad and dumb.

He had massacred La Chouette, not in a fit of madness, but in an excess of burning fever,

* Rodolphe had always left Madame Georges in ignorance of the fate of the Maître d'Ecole.

such as he had been attacked with at Bouqueval on the night of his horrible vision.

After his arrest at the tavern of the Champs Elysées, recovering from his transient delirium, the Maitre d'Ecole had awoken in a cell of the dépôt of the Conciergerie, where the insane are temporarily confined. Hearing every one say around him, "He is a furious madman," he resolved to continue to play this part, and pretended dumbness in order not to compromise himself by his answers, in case they should doubt his feigning insanity.

This stratagem succeeded. Conducted to Bicêtre, he pretended to have other attacks of madness, always taking care to choose the night for these manifestations, in order to escape the penetrating observation of the chief physician; the attending surgeon, awakened in haste, never arriving until the crisis was over or nearly at an end. The very small number of the accomplices of the Maitre d'Ecole, who knew his real name and his escape from the galleys at Rochefort, were ignorant of what had become of him, and, besides, had no interest in denouncing him; thus his identity could not be proved. He hoped, then, to remain always at Bicêtre, by continuing his part of a madman and mute.

Yes, always. Such was then the only wish, the sole desire of this man, thanks to the inability to do harm which paralyzed his savage instincts. Thanks to the state of profound seclusion in which he had lived in the cellar of Bras-Rouge, remorse, as is known, had taken almost entire possession of his iron heart.

By force of concentrating his mind upon one unceasing meditation (the recollection of his past crimes), deprived of all communication with the exterior world, his ideas often assumed a sort of reality, as he had told La Chouette; then passed before him sometimes the features of his victim; but this was not madness—it was the power of memory carried to its greatest extent.

Thus this man, still in the prime of life, of a vigorous constitution—this man, who, without doubt, would live many long years—this man, who enjoyed all the plenitude of his reason, was to pass these long years among madmen, without ever exchanging a word with a human being. Otherwise, if he were discovered, he would be led to the scaffold for his new murders, or he would be condemned to a perpetual imprisonment among scoundrels, for whom he felt a horror which was augmented by his repentance.

The Maitre d'Ecole was seated on a bench; a forest of grayish hair covered his hideous and enormous head; with his elbows on his knees, he supported his chin on his hand.

Although this frightful man was deprived of sight, two holes replaced his nose, and his mouth was deformed, yet a withering, incurable despair was still manifest on his horrid visage.

A lunatic of a sad, benevolent, and juvenile appearance, knelt before the Maitre d'Ecole, held his large hands in his own, looked at him with kindness, and, with a sweet voice, constantly repeated, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"See, now," said the learned madman, gravely, "the sole conversation which this idiot can

held with the blind man. Yes, with him the eyes of the body are closed, those of the mind are without doubt opened, and he will be pleased if I enter into communication with him."

"I do not doubt it," said the doctor; while the poor lunatic with the melancholy face regarded the abominable face of the Maitre d'Ecole with compassion, and repeated, in his soft voice, "Strawberries! strawberries! strawberries!"

"Since his entrance here, this poor idiot has uttered no other words than these," said the doctor to Madame Georges, who looked at the Maitre d'Ecole with horror; "what mysterious events are connected with these words, I cannot penetrate."

"Mon Dieu! my mother," said Germain to Madame Georges, "how much this poor blind man seems depressed!"

"It is true, my child," answered Madame Georges; "in spite of myself my heart is oppressed; the sight of him sickens me. Oh! how sad it is to see humanity under this dreadful aspect!"

Hardly had Madame Georges pronounced these words, than the Maitre d'Ecole shuddered; his scarred face became pale under its cicatrices; he arose, and turned his head so quickly towards the mother of Germain, that she could not refrain from a cry of horror, although she did not know who he was.

The Maitre d'Ecole had recognised the voice of his wife, and the words of Madame Georges told him that she had spoken to his son.

"What is the matter, my mother?" cried Germain.

"Nothing, my child; but the movement of this man, the expression of his face—all this has frightened me. Hold! monsieur, pardon my weakness," added she, addressing the doctor, "I almost regret having yielded to my curiosity in accompanying my son."

"Oh! for once, my mother—there is nothing to regret."

"Very sure am I that our good mother will never return here, nor we either, my little Germain," said Rigolette: "it is too affecting."

"Allons! you are a little coward: is it not so, Monsieur le Docteur?" said Germain, smiling; "is not my wife a little coward?"

"I confess," answered the doctor, "that the sight of this unhappy blind and dumb man has made a strong impression upon me—I, who have seen so much distress."

"*Quelle frimousse, hein! old darling!*" whispered Anastasia. "Well! in comparison with you, all men appear to me as ugly as this frightful madman. It is on this account that no one can boast of—you comprehend, my Alfred?"

"Anastasia, I shall dream of that figure, it is certain—I shall have the night-mare."

"My friend," said the doctor to the Maitre d'Ecole, "how do you find yourself?"

The Maitre d'Ecole remained mute.

"Do you not hear me, then?" continued the doctor, striking him lightly on the shoulder.

The Maitre d'Ecole made no reply, but bowed his head. At the end of some moments, from his sightless eyes there fell a tear.

"He weeps," said the doctor.

"Poor man!" added Germain, with compassion.

The Maitre d'Ecole shuddered; he heard anew the voice of his son, who evinced for him a sentiment of compassion.

"What is the matter? What afflicts you?" demanded the doctor.

The Maitre d'Ecole buried his face in his hands.

"We shall obtain nothing," said the doctor.

"Let me try; I am going to console him," replied the learned madman. "I am going to demonstrate that all kinds of orthogonal surfaces in which the three systems are isothermal, are, 1st. Those of the superficies of the second order; 2d. Those of the ellipsoids of revolution around the small axis and the grand axis; 3d. Those—but, no," said the madman, reflecting. "I will commence with him on the planetary system." Then addressing the young lunatic, who was still kneeling before the Maitre d'Ecole, "Take yourself off from there, with your strawberries."

"My boy," said the doctor to the young madman, "each one must have his turn with the old man. Let your comrade take your place."

The young boy obeyed at once, arose, looked at the doctor timidly with his large blue eyes, showed his deference by a salute, made a sign of adieu to the Maitre d'Ecole, and departed, repeating, in a plaintive voice, "Strawberries! strawberries!"

The doctor, perceiving the painful effect this scene had produced upon Madame Georges, said to her, "Happily, madame, we are going to find Morel, and, if my hopes are realized, your heart will expand with joy on seeing this excellent man restored to the tenderness of his wife and daughter."

And the physician withdrew, followed by the friends of the artisan Morel.

The Maitre d'Ecole remained alone with the learned madman, who commenced to explain to him, very learnedly and very eloquently, the imposing movement of the stars, which describe their immense revolutions silently in the heavens, of which the normal state is night.

But the Maitre d'Ecole did not listen. He thought, with profound despair, that he should never hear again the voices of his son and wife. Confident of the just horror with which he had inspired them, of the misfortune, the shame, the affright into which he would have plunged them by the revelation of his name, he would have endured rather a thousand deaths than have disclosed himself to them. One single last consolation remained to him; for a moment he had inspired his son with pity. And in spite of himself, he recalled to mind the words which Rodolphe had spoken to him before he had inflicted this terrible chastisement.

"Each of your words is an oath, each of your words shall be a prayer. You are audacious and cruel because you are strong; you shall be meek and humble, because you shall be weak. Your heart is closed to repentance; some day you will weep for your victims. From a man you have made yourself a savage beast; some day your understanding shall be restored by repentance. You have not even spared what the wild beasts spare, the female and her young. After a long life consecrated to the expiation of your crimes, your last prayer shall be to supplicate God to grant you the unhoped-

for happiness of dying between your wife and your son."

"We are going to pass the court of the idiots, and then we shall reach the building where we shall find Morel," said the doctor, on leaving the court where the Maitre d'Ecole was.

CHAPTER XVIII

MOREL, THE LAPIDARY.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sadness with which the sight of the lunatics had inspired her, Madame Georges could not but stop for a moment before a railed court, where the incurable idiots were confined.

Poor beings! who often have not even the instinct of the beast, and whose origin is almost always unknown—unknown to all as well as to themselves. Thus they pass through life, absolute strangers to the affections, to thought, experiencing only the most limited animal wants. If madness does not reveal itself at once to the superficial observer, by a single inspection of the physiognomy of the lunatic, it is but too easy to recognise the physical character of idiotism.

Doctor Herbin had no occasion to direct the attention of Madame Georges to the expression of savage brutishness, stupid insensibility, or imbecile amazement, which gave to the features of the unfortunate wretches an expression at once hideous and painful to behold. Almost all were clothed in long dirty frocks, ragged and torn; for, in spite of all possible "surveillance," these beings, absolutely deprived of instinct and reason, cannot be prevented from tearing and soiling their vestments, in crawling and rolling like beasts in the mire of the courts, where they remain during the day.

Some of them, crouched in the most obscure corners of a shed which sheltered them, gathered in a heap, like animals in their dens, uttered a kind of hollow and continual rattling noise. Others, leaning against the wall, immovable, looked fixedly at the sun.

An old man, of monstrous obesity, seated on a wooden chair, devoured his pittance with animal voracity, casting on either side oblique and angry glances.

These walked rapidly, describing a circle, limiting themselves to a very small space. This strange exercise would last for entire hours.

Those, seated on the ground, swayed their bodies continually backward and forward, only interrupting this movement of vertiginous monotony by shouts of laughter—the guttural, harsh laugh of idiocy.

Others, in fine, were almost in a state of annihilation, only opening their eyes at the moment of repast, remaining inert, inactive, deaf, dumb, blind—not a cry, not a gesture announcing their vitality.

The complete absence of verbal or intellectual communication is one of the most gloomy characteristics of a company of idiots. Lunatics, notwithstanding the incoherency of their words and thoughts, at least speak, know each other, and seek each other; but among idiots there reigns a stupid indifference, an isolated savageness. Never do they pronounce an articulate word. Sometimes is heard among them savage laugh-

ter, or groans and drills which resemble nothing human. Scarcely can a few among them recognise their keepers; and yet, let us repeat it with admiration, with reverence to the Creator, these unfortunate creatures, who seem no longer to belong to our species, and not even to the animal species, by the complete annihilation of their intellectual faculties; these incurable beings, who partake more of the mollusca than animated life, and who often thus pass through all the stages of a long existence, are surrounded by tender cares, of which we have no idea.

Doubtless it is well to respect the principle of human dignity, even in these unhappy beings, who have only the exterior of men; but let us always repeat, one should also think of the dignity of those who, endowed with all their faculties, filled with zeal and activity, are the living strength of the nation; to give them consciousness of this dignity by encouraging them, and reward them when it is manifested by the love of industry, by resignation, by probity; not to say, in fine, with a *semi-orthodox* selfishness, "Let us punish here below, God will recompense above."

"Poor people!" said Madame Georges, following the doctor, after having cast a last look into the court of the idiots; "how sad it is to think there is no remedy for their woes!"

"Alas! none, madame!" answered the doctor; "above all, when they have reached this age; for now, thanks to the progress of the science, idiot children receive a kind of education which develops, at least, the atom of imperfect intelligence with which they are sometimes endowed. We have a school here, directed with as much perseverance as enlightened patience, which already offers the most satisfactory results; by a very ingenious method, the mental and physical capacities are exercised at the same time; and many have been taught the alphabet, figures, and to distinguish colours; they have also succeeded in teaching them to sing in chorus; and I assure you, madame, that there is a kind of strange charm, at once sad and touching, in hearing these plaintive, wondering voices raised towards heaven in a chant, of which almost all the words, although in French, are to them unknown. But here we are at the building, where we shall find Morel. I have recommended that he should be left alone this morning, that the effect which I hope to produce upon him may have greater power."

"And what is his madness, Monsieur?" whispered Madame Georges to the doctor, so as not to be heard by Louise.

"He imagines that if he does not earn thirteen hundred francs in his day's work, to pay a debt contracted with a notary named Jacques Ferrand, Louise will die on the scaffold for the crime of infanticide."

"Ah! monsieur, this notary was a monster!" cried Madame Georges, informed of the hatred of this man against Germain. "Louise Morel and her father are not his only victims; he has persecuted my son with undying animosity."

"Louise Morel has told me all, madame," answered the doctor. "Dieu merci! this wretch has ceased to live! but, be pleased to wait for me a moment, with these good people; I am going to see how poor Morel is. Then," addressing the daughter of the lapidary, "I beg you, Louise, pay great attention! at the moment I cry, *Come!* appear at once, but alone; when I say

a second time, *Come!* the others will also enter."

"Ah! monsieur, my courage fails me," said Louise, drying her tears. "Poor father! if this trial should be useless!"

"I hope it will save him; for a long time I have been preparing for it. Come, compose yourself, and remember my instructions!"

And the doctor, leaving the persons who accompanied him, entered into a room, of which the grated windows opened on a garden.

Thanks to repose, to the salutary "régime," the comforts with which he was surrounded, the features of Morel the artisan were no longer pale, ghastly, and wrinkled by an unhealthy meagreness; his full face, slightly coloured, announced the return of health; but a melancholy smile, a certain fixed expression, indicated that his reason was not yet completely re-established.

When the doctor entered, Morel, seated and bent over a table, imitated the exercise of his trade as a lapidary, saying,

"Thirteen hundred francs,—thirteen hundred francs, or Louise to the scaffold,—thirteen hundred francs—let us work—work—work."

This aberration, of which the attacks were becoming less and less frequent, had always been the primordial symptom of his madness. The physician, at first vexed to find Morel at this moment under the influence of his monomania, soon hoped to make it serve his project; he took from his pocket a purse containing sixty-five golden louis, which he had placed there for the purpose, poured the gold into his hand, and said suddenly to Morel who, profoundly absorbed by his ideal occupation, had not perceived the arrival of the doctor,

"My good Morel! you have worked enough; you have earned the thirteen hundred francs which you need to save Louise—here they are." And the doctor threw on the table his handful of gold.

"Louise saved!" cried the lapidary, clutching the gold eagerly. "I will run to the notary," and, rising precipitately, he rushed to the door.

"Come," cried the doctor, with lively anxiety, for the instantaneous cure of the lapidary might depend upon this first impression.

Hardly had he said, *Come*, than Louise appeared at the door, at the moment that her father reached it.

Morel, stupified, recoiled two steps, and the gold dropped which he held.

For some moments he looked at Louise with profound amazement, not yet recognising her. He seemed, however, to be endeavouring to collect his thoughts; then, approaching her by degrees, he looked at her with an uneasy and timid curiosity.

Louise, trembling with emotion, with difficulty restrained her tears, while the doctor, recommending her, by a sign, to remain silent, watched attentively the smallest movements of the lapidary's countenance.

He, leaning towards his daughter, began to turn pale; he passed both of his hands over his forehead, covered with sweat; then, taking a step towards her, he wished to speak, but his voice died upon his lips, his paleness increased, and he looked around him with surprise, as if he were just awaking from a dream.

"Well, well," whispered the doctor to Louise; "it is a good sign; when I say, *Come*, throw yourself into his arms, calling him father."

The lapidary placed his hands on his chest, looking at himself (if we may so express it) from

head to foot, as if to convince himself of his identity. His features expressed a sad uncertainty: instead of fixing his eyes on his daughter, he seemed as if he wished to hide himself from her sight. Then he said, in a low and broken voice,

"No! no! a dream—where am I? impossible—a dream—it is not she." Then, seeing the gold scattered on the floor, "And this gold—I do not remember—am I awake? My head turns—I dare not look—I am ashamed: it is not Louise."

"Come," said the doctor, in a loud voice.

"Father, recognise me, then: I am Louise, your daughter!" cried she, bursting into tears, and throwing herself into his arms; at the same moment, Madame Morel, Rigolette, Madame Georges, Germain, and the Pipelets entered the apartment.

"Oh! mon Dieu!" said Morel, whom Louise loaded with caresses, "where am I? what do they want with me? what has taken place? I cannot believe." Then, after a pause, he took suddenly the head of Louise between his two hands, looked at her fixedly, and cried, after some moments of increasing emotion,

"Louise!"

"He is saved," said the doctor.

"My husband! my poor Morel!" cried the wife of the lapidary, running to join Louise.

"My wife!" said Morel; "my wife and child!"

"And I also, Monsieur Morel," said Rigolette; "all your friends are collected around you."

"All your friends! do you see, Monsieur Morel?" added Germain.

"Mademoiselle Rigolette! M. Germain!" said the lapidary, recognising each personage with new astonishment.

"And your old friends of the lodge, too!" said Anastasia, approaching in her turn with Alfred; "here are the Pipelets—the old Pipelets—friends till death; and '*all-les-chez donc*,' Père Morel, here is a great day."

"M. Pipelet and his wife! so many people around me! it seems to me so long since! And but, in fine, it is Louise, is it not?" cried he, with emotion, pressing his daughter to his heart. "It is you, Louise? very sure?"

"My poor father, yes; it is I; it is my mother: there are all your friends—you shall leave us no more—we shall be happy now—very happy."

"Very happy. But wait until I recollect—all happy; it seems to me, however, that they came to conduct you to prison, Louise."

"Yes, my father; but I have been acquitted—you see it—I am here—near to you."

"Wait still—wait—my memory returns." Then he said, with affright, "And the notary?"

"Dead!"

"Dead—he! then I believe you; we can be happy; but where am I? how am I here? for how long a time, and why? I do not exactly recollect."

"You have been so sick, monsieur," said the doctor, "that you have been brought here, into the country; you have had a fever—very violent—delirium."

"Yes, yes; I recollect: the last thing—before my illness—I was talking to my daughter, and who—how then? Ah! a very generous man, M. Rodolphe—he prevented my arrest. Since then I recollect nothing."

"Your disease was attended by a loss of memory," said the doctor. "The sight of your daughter, of your wife, of your friends, has restored it to you."

"And at whose house am I, then?"

"A friend of M. Rodolphe's," Germain hastened to say: "the change of air, it was thought, would be useful to you."

"Very well," whispered the doctor; and, addressing the superintendent, he added, "Order the hack around to the garden door, so that he shall not be obliged to pass through the courts to go out at the main entrance."

Thus, as often happens in cases of madness, Morel had no recollection nor consciousness of the alienation of mind with which he had been attacked.

What remains to be told? Some moments afterward, leaning on his wife and daughter, and accompanied by a medical student, who, as a matter of precaution, was to accompany them to Paris, Morel got into the carriage and left Bicêtre, without suspecting that he had been confined there as a lunatic.

"You think this man is completely cured?" said Madame Georges to the doctor, who was conducting her to the principal entrance of Bicêtre.

"I think so, madame, and I have expressly left him under the happy influence of this family meeting; I should have feared to separate them. I shall go and see him every day until his cure is perfectly established; for, not only does he interest me very much, but he was particularly recommended to me, on his first entrance here, by the *chargé d'affaires* of the Grand-duchy of Gerolstein."

Germain and his mother exchanged glances.

"I thank you, monsieur," said Madame Georges, "for the kindness with which you have allowed me to visit this fine establishment; and I congratulate myself at having witnessed a touching scene, which your knowledge and skill had foreseen and predicted."

"And I, madame, doubly congratulate myself upon the success which has restored so excellent a man to the arms of his family."

Some moments afterward, Madame Georges, Rigolette, and Germain had left Bicêtre, as well as M. and Madame Pipelet.

Just as Doctor Herbin returned to the courts, he met one of the superior officers of the house, who said to him, "Ah! my dear Monsieur Herbin, you cannot imagine what a scene I have just witnessed. For an observer like you it would have been an inexhaustible source of—"

"How then? What scene?"

"You know that we have here two women who are condemned to death—the mother and daughter—who are to be executed to-morrow?"

"Doubtless."

"Eh bien! never in my life have I seen hardness and unconcern like this mother's; she is an infernal woman."

"Is it not the widow Martial, who showed so much unblushing assurance at her trial?"

"The same."

"And what has she done more?"

"She demanded to be confined in the same cell with her daughter until the moment of her execution. They have granted her request. Her daughter, much less hardened than she is, appears to be softened as the fatal moment approaches, while the diabolical assurance of the widow augments still more, if such a thing were possible. Just now the venerable almoner of the prison entered their cell to offer them the con-

solutions of religion. The daughter was about to accept them, when her mother, without losing for a moment her usual coolness attacked both her and the almoner with such frightful remarks that the venerable priest was obliged to leave the dungeon, after having, in vain, endeavoured to address some holy words to this unmanageable woman."

"Upon the eve of mounting the scaffold! Such hardihood is truly infernal," said the doctor.

"Would not one say that this was one of those families pursued by a fatality? The father died upon the scaffold; one son is in the galleys; another, also condemned to death, has lately escaped. The eldest son, and two younger children only, have escaped this frightful contagion. However, this woman has sent for the eldest son, the sole honest man of this detestable race, to come to-morrow morning to receive her last wishes! What an interview!"

"Are you not curious to be present?"

"Frankly, no. You know my opinion concerning punishment by death, and I have no need of such a spectacle to confirm this opinion. If this horrible woman carries her unwavering firmness and assurance to the scaffold, what a sight for the people! what a deplorable example!"

"There is something singular in this double execution—the day has been fixed." "How?"

"To-day is the '*ma-carême*'!"

"Eh bien?" "To-morrow, the execution takes place at seven o'clock. Now the crowd of maskers, who will pass the night at the balls of the '*barrières*,' will necessarily meet the mournful procession on their return to Paris; without speaking of the place of execution, the Barrière Saint Jacques, where will be heard, in the distance, the music at the surrounding taverns; for to celebrate the last day of the carnival, they dance in these '*guinguettes*' until ten or eleven in the morning."

The next morning the sun rose clear and glorious. At four o'clock, several piquets of infantry and cavalry surrounded and guarded the approaches to Bicêtre.

We will conduct the reader to the cell where we will find the widow and her daughter Calebasse.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TOILETTE.

At Bicêtre, a gloomy corridor, lighted at intervals by grated windows, or kind of airholes just above the level of the courtyard, leads to the condemned cell.

This dungeon received its light only from a large wicket in the upper part of the door, which opened into the dark passage spoken of above.

In this cell, with its damp and mouldy walls, its floor paved with stones as cold as those of the sepulchre, were confined the widow Martial and her daughter, Calebasse. The sharp face of the convict's widow, stern and immovable, stood out in bold relief like a marble mask, from the midst of the obscurity which existed in the dungeon.

Deprived of the use of her hands, for under her black dress she wore the "*camisole de force*" (a kind of long cassock of coarse gray stuff, laced behind the back, the sleeves of which were made and closed like bags), she asked that her cap might be taken off, complaining of great heat in

the head. Her gray hair fell dishevelled upon her shoulders. Seated on the edge of the bed, her feet on the ground, she looked fixedly on her daughter, Calebasse, who was separated from her by the width of the dungeon.

She, half reclining, and also dressed in the "*camisole de force*," had her back against the wall. Her head was hanging on her breast, her eyes fixed, her respiration broken. Save a slight convulsive movement, which from time to time agitated her under jaw, her features appeared calm, but of livid paleness.

At the farther end of the dungeon, near the door, under the open wicket, a veteran with the riband of the Legion of Honour, with a rough and swarthy face, a bald head, and long gray mustaches, is seated on a chair. He is never to lose sight of the condemned.

"It is very cold here! and yet my eyes burn; and then I am thirsty—always thirsty," said Calebasse, at the end of a few moments. "Some water, if you please, monsieur?"

The old soldier arose and took from a bench a tin pail of water, filled a tumbler, and gave her a drink.

After having drunk greedily, she said, "Thank you, monsieur."

"Will you drink?" asked the soldier of the widow. She shook her head in the negative.

"What o'clock is it, monsieur?" said Calebasse.

"It will soon be half past four."

"In three hours!" resumed Calebasse, with a sardonic and sinister smile, alluding to the time of her execution, "in three hours—" She dared not finish.

The widow shrugged her shoulders. Her daughter comprehended her thoughts, and replied, "You have more courage than I, mother; you never falter—you—"

"Never."

"I know it well—I see it well. Your face is as tranquil as if you were seated by the fire of our kitchen, sewing. Ah! these good days are so far off—so far—"

"Babbler!"

"It is true: instead of resting there and think, without saying anything, I would rather talk—I would rather—"

"Shake off your thoughts, coward!"

"Even if it should be so, mother, every one has not your courage. I have done all I could to imitate you. I have not listened to the priest, because you did not wish it. And yet I may have been wrong—for, in fine," added the condemned girl, shuddering, "after—who knows? and after—will be very soon—it is—"

"In three hours."

"How coldly you say that, mother! Mon Dieu, mon Dieu! and yet it is true, to say that we are here, both of us, that we are not sick, that we do not wish to die, and yet in three hours—"

"In three hours you will have died like a true Martial. You will have seen black, that's all; be bold, my daughter."

"It is not right for you to talk to your daughter in that way," said the old soldier, in a slow and grave tone; "you would have done much better to have allowed her to speak with the priest."

The widow shrugged her shoulders with savage contempt, and, without turning her head, she continued: "Courage, my daughter; we will show them that women have more firmness

than these men, with their priests—the cowards!”

“The Commandant Leblond was the bravest of the third regiment of Chasseurs; I saw him with wounds at the breach of Saragossa, and die making the sign of the cross,” said the veteran.

“You were his chaplain, then?” demanded the widow, with a savage burst of laughter.

“I was his soldier,” answered the veteran, mildly. “It was only to let you know that one can pray when about to die, without being a coward.”

Calebasse looked attentively at this man with the bronzed visage, a perfect type of the soldier of the Empire; a deep scar furrowed his left cheek, and was lost in his large “moustache.” The simple words of this veteran, whose features, wounds, and red riband all announced calm and tried bravery, profoundly struck the widow’s daughter.

She had refused the consolation of the priest, more from shame and fear of her mother, than from callousness. In her restless and dying thoughts, she compared the impious jesting of her mother with the piety of the soldier. Strong in this testimony, she thought she could listen, without cowardice, to those religious instincts which even intrepid men had obeyed.

“In truth,” said she, with anguish, “why did I not wish to hear the priest? there is no weakness in that. Besides, it would keep off my thoughts; and then, at length, after, who knows?”

“Again!” said the widow, in a tone of withering scorn. “Time is wanting—it is a pity—you would be religious. The arrival of your brother Martial will finish your conversion. But he will not come; the honest man, the good son.”

Just as the widow pronounced these last words, the door of the prison opened.

“Already!” cried Calebasse, with a convulsive start. “Oh! mon Dieu, they have advanced the hour! They have deceived us!”

“So much the better—if the watch of the executioner is too fast—your follies will not dishonour me.”

“Madame,” said the “employé” of the prison with that kind of commiseration which savours of death, “your son is here; will you see him?”

“Yes,” answered the widow, without turning her head. “Enter, monsieur,” said the “employé.”

Martial entered.

The veteran remained in the dungeon, the door of which was left open as a matter of precaution. Through the gloom of the corridor, half lighted by the increasing day and by a lamp, several soldiers were seen sitting and standing.

Martial was as pale as his mother; his countenance expressed deep and profound anguish, his knees trembled under him. In spite of the crimes of this woman, in spite of the aversion that she had always shown for him, he had thought it a duty to obey her last wishes.

As soon as he entered the dungeon, the widow cast on him a searching look, and said to him in a hollow and angry voice, as if to awaken in her son a feeling of revenge,

“You see what they are going to do with your mother—with your sister!”

“Ah! my mother, it is frightful; but I told you of it, alas!—I told you.”

The widow bit her pale lips with rage; her son did not comprehend her; she resumed:

“They are going to kill us, as they killed your father.”

“Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! and I can do nothing—it is finished. Now, what would you have me do? Why did you not listen to me—you and my sister? You would not have been here.”

“Ah! it is so,” answered the widow, with her habitual and savage irony; “you find that well?”

“My mother!”

“Now you are satisfied; you can say, without a lie, that your mother is dead: you shall no longer blush for her.”

“If I were a bad son,” answered Martial, quickly, shocked at the unjust harshness of his mother, “I should not be here.”

“You come from curiosity.”

“I come to obey you.”

“Ah! if I had listened to you, Martial, instead of listening to my mother, I should not be here,” cried Calebasse, in a heart-rending voice, and yielding at length to her anguish and terror, which, until now (through the influence of her mother), she had restrained. “It is your fault: I curse you, my mother!”

“She repents—she curses me; you must be delighted, heir?” said the widow to her son, with a burst of diabolical laughter.

Without replying to her, Martial approached Calebasse, whose agony continued, and said to her, with compassion, “Poor sister! it is too late now.”

“Never too late to be a coward!” cried the mother, with fury. “Oh! what a race! what a race! Happily, Nicolas has escaped; happily, François and Amandine will escape you. They have already the seeds of vice: misery will cause them to grow!”

“Ah! Martial, watch well over them, or they will end like my mother and myself. They will also lose their heads,” cried Calebasse, uttering a hollow groan.

“He will do well to watch over them,” cried the widow, vehemently; “vice and misery will be stronger than he, and some day they will avenge father, mother, and sister.”

“Your horrible hope will not be realized, my mother,” answered Martial, indignantly. “Neither they nor I shall ever more have misery to fear. La Louve saved the young girl whom Nicolas wished to drown; the relations of this young girl have proposed to give us plenty of money, or less money and lands in Algiers. We have preferred the lands. There is some danger, but that suits us. To-morrow we shall leave with the children, and we shall never return.”

“Is what you say true?” asked the widow, in a tone of irritated surprise.

“I never told a falsehood.”

“You do now, to make me mad.”

“Why? because the welfare of your children is secured?”

“Yes; from the wolf’s cubs you would make lambs. The blood of your father, your sister, mine, will not be avenged.”

“At this moment, do not talk thus.”

“I have killed—they kill me. We are even.”

“My mother, repentance.”

The widow shouted with laughter.

“For thirty years I have lived in crime, and to repent for thirty years they give me three days, and death at the end of them. Do you think I shall have time? No, no; when my

and falls, it will gnash its teeth with rage and hatred."

"My brother, help—take me from hence; they are coming," murmured Calbasse, in a suffocating voice, for the poor creature began to be delirious.

"Will you hush?" said the widow, exasperated by the weakness of Calbasse; "will you hush? Oh! the wretch! and she is my daughter!"

"Mother! mother!" cried Martial, tortured by this horrible scene, "why did you send for me?"

"Because I thought to give you a heart and revenge; but who has not the one has not the other," *Lache! lache! coward!*

"My mother!"

"*Lache! lache! lache!*"

At this moment a noise of footsteps was heard in the corridor. The veteran looked at his watch, and stood up.

The rising sun, dazzling and radiant, shed suddenly a golden beam of light through the grated window of the corridor opposite the door of the dungeon.

This door was thrown open, and two keepers appeared, bringing two chains; then the jailer came, and said to the widow, in an agitated voice,

"Madame, it is time."

The widow stood up, impassible; Calbasse uttered piercing cries.

Four men entered. Three of them, roughly clad, held in their hands small parcels of very fine but strong cord. The largest of these four men, neatly dressed in black, wearing a round hat and a white cravat, handed a paper to the jailer.

This man was the executioner.

The paper was a receipt for two women fit to be guillotined. The executioner took possession of these two of God's creatures; from that time he was answerable.

To the frightful despair of Calbasse had succeeded a helpless torpor. Two of the assistants were obliged to seat her on her bed, and to sustain her. Her jaws, clunched by convulsions, hardly allowed her to utter some unmeaning words; she rolled around in vacancy her dull and almost sightless eyes; her chin fell upon her breast, and, without the assistance of the two deputies, her body would have sunk to the ground like an inert mass.

Martial (after having for a long time embraced this unfortunate being), alarmed, not daring nor able to move a step, and as if fascinated by the scene, remained immovable.

The brazen hardness of the widow did not forsake her; with her head erect and thrown back, she assisted to take off the "*camisole de force*," which impeded her movements. It fell to the ground, and she remained in her old dress of black woolen.

"Where must I place myself?" she asked, in a firm voice.

"Have the kindness to seat yourself in one of these two chairs," said the executioner, pointing to them.

The door being left open, several of the keepers, the director of the prison, and some privileged persons, were seen standing in the corridor.

The widow walked with a firm and bold step to the place indicated, passing near her daughter, when she stopped, and said, in a voice slightly broken,

"My daughter, embrace me!"

At the voice of her mother, Calbasse was aroused from her apathy, drew up on her seat, and, with a gesture of malediction, she cried,

"If there is a hell, descend there, accursed!"

"My child, embrace me!" said the widow again, making a step towards her daughter.

"Do not approach me! you have ruined me!" murmured the unfortunate, throwing out her hands as if to repulse her mother.

"Forgive me!"

"No, no!" said Calbasse, in a convulsed voice; and this effort having exhausted her strength, she fell back, almost without consciousness, into the arms of the assistants.

A shade passed over the impassible face of the widow; for a moment her dry and burning eyes became moistened. At this instant she met the eyes of her son.

After a moment's hesitation, and as if she yielded to the effect of an inward struggle, she said to him, "And you?"

Martial threw himself sobbing into the arms of his mother.

"Enough!" said the widow, overcoming her emotion, and disengaging herself from the embraces of her son. "Monsieur is waiting," she added, pointing to the executioner.

Then she walked rapidly towards the chair, where she resolutely seated herself.

The spark of maternal sensibility, which had for a moment lighted up the dark recesses of this corrupted heart, was extinguished forever.

"Monster," said the veteran to Martial, approaching him with interest; "do not remain here. Come, come."

Martial, stupefied with horror and alarm, mechanically followed the soldier.

Two of the assistants had carried the wretched Calbasse to the other chair; the one of them sustained the almost lifeless body, while the other, by means of whip cord exceedingly fine, but very long, tied her hands behind her back, and also fastened her feet together by the ankles, allowing cord enough to enable her to walk slowly.

The executioner and his other assistant performed the same operation on the widow, whose features underwent no alteration; only from time to time she coughed slightly.

When the condemned were thus prevented from offering any resistance, the executioner, drawing from his pocket a long pair of scissors, said to her with politeness,

"Have the goodness, madame, to bend your head."

The widow obeyed, saying,

"We are good customers; you have had my husband: now here are his wife and daughter."

Without replying, the executioner gathered in his left hand the long gray hair of the condemned, and commenced cutting it short—very short, particularly about the neck.

"This makes the third time that I have had my hair dressed in my lifetime," said the widow, with a horrible laugh: "the day of my first communion, when they put on my veil; the day of my marriage, when they put on my orange blossoms; and now to-day—is it not so?—the head-dress of death?"

The executioner remained silent.

The hair of the condemned being thick and coarse, the operation was so long in being performed, that that of Calbasse lay strewn upon the ground before the mother's was half finished.

"You do not know of what I am thinking?"

said the widow, after having looked at her daughter again.

The executioner continued to keep silence.

Nothing could be heard but the sonorous clipping of the scissors and the kind of hiccough and rattling which from time to time escaped from the throat of Calesasse.

At this moment was seen in the corridor a priest of venerable appearance, who approached the director, and spoke a few words to him in a low tone. This holy minister came to make a last effort to soften the heart of the widow.

"I think," resumed the widow at the end of some moments, and seeing that the executioner did not reply, "I think that at five years old, my daughter, whose head is to be cut off, was the handsomest child that I ever saw. She had flaxen hair and rosy cheeks. Then, who would have told me that—" After a pause, she cried, with a burst of laughter, and an expression impossible to be described, "What a comedy is fate!"

At this moment the last locks of the condemned fell upon her shoulders.

"It is finished, madame," said the executioner, politely.

"Thank you. I recommend to you my son Nicolas," said the widow; "you will dress his hair some of these days!"

A keeper came and whispered a few words to her.

"No; I have already said no," answered she, roughly. The priest heard these words, raised his eyes towards heaven, clasped his hands, and disappeared.

"Madame, we are going to set out: will you take something?" said the executioner, obsequiously. "Thank you; to-night I will take a swallow of earth."

And the widow, after this new sarcasm, stood up erect. Although her step was firm and resolute, the executioner obligingly wished to assist her; she made a gesture of impatience, and said, in a harsh and imperious tone,

"Do not touch me; I have a firm step and a good eye. On the scaffold you will see if I have a good voice, and if I speak words of repentance."

And the widow, leaving the dungeon, escorted by the executioner and an assistant, entered the corridor. The two other assistants were obliged to carry Calesasse on a chair: she was dying. After having traversed the whole length of the corridor, the funeral cortege ascended the stone staircase, which conducted to a court on the outside.

The sun, with its warm and golden light, gilded the tops of the high white walls which surrounded the court, and strangely contrasted with the pure blue of the sky.

The air was soft and balmy; never was a spring morning more smiling, more magnificent. In this court were seen a detachment of *gens d'armes*, a hack, and a long, narrow vehicle, painted yellow, drawn by three post-horses, which neighed gayly, shaking the little bells on their harness.

This vehicle was entered from behind, like an omnibus. This was the cause of a last joke from the widow.

"The conductor will not say *full*," said she, as she mounted the step as lightly as the cord which confined her ancles would allow.

Calesasse, expiring, and sustained by an assistant, was placed in the carriage opposite her mother, and the door was closed.

The hackney-coachman had fallen asleep; the executioner shook him.

"Excuse me, citizen," said he, descending hastily from his seat; "but a night of the *ma carême* is tough. I had just taken to Vendanges de Bourgogne a load of *'débardeurs'* and *'débarduses'*, who were singing '*La mère Godichon*,' when you engaged me by the hour. I—"

"Allons, it is good. Follow this vehicle to the Boulevard Saint Jacques."

"Excuse me, citizen. An hour ago I was going to the 'Vendanges,' now to the guillotine! That proves that '*les courtes se suivent et ne se ressemblent pas*,' as the saying is."

The two vehicles, preceded and followed by the *gens d'armes*, left Bicêtre and took the road to Paris.

We have presented the picture of the *toilette* of the condemned in all its frightful reality, because it seems to us that we can derive from it powerful arguments.

Against punishment by death.

Against the manner in which it is applied.

Against the effects which must be expected from such an example given to the populace.

The *toilette*, although divested of that solemnity, at once imposing and religious, which ought, at least, to surround all the acts of the highest punishment known to the laws, is the most impressive of all the ceremonies attending the execution of a criminal, and yet it is concealed from the multitude.

In Spain, on the contrary, the condemned remains exposed during three days in a "*chapelle ardente*;" his coffin is continually before his eyes; the priests say the prayers for the dying; the bells of the church night and day ring a funeral knell.

It will be conceived that this kind of initiation to death may alarm the most hardened criminals, and inspire with salutary terror the crowd which surrounds the "*chapelle mortuaire*."

Then the day of the execution is a day of public mourning; the bells of all the churches toll the "*trepasés*;"* the condemned is slowly conducted to the scaffold, with mournful and imposing pomp; his coffin is carried before him; the priests, walking at his side, chant the prayers for the dead; then comes the religious brotherhood; and, finally, the mendicant friars, asking, from the crowd, money for prayers for the repose of the culprit's soul. The crowd never remains deaf to this appeal.

Without doubt, all this is frightful, but it is logical and imposing. It shows that they do not cut off from this world a creature of God, full of life and strength, as they would slaughter an ox. It causes the multitude to reflect (who always judge of the crime by the magnitude of the punishment) that homicide is a fearful offence, since its punishment disturbs, afflicts, and sets in commotion a whole city.

Again, this dreadful spectacle may cause serious reflections, inspire salutary alarm; and that which is barbarous in this human sacrifice, is at least hidden by the awful majesty of its execution.

But, we ask, the events taking place exactly as we have described them (and sometimes even *less seriously*), what kind of an example can it afford?

Early in the morning, the condemned is bound

* A knell for the dead.

and thrown into a closed carriage; the postillion whips up his horses, reaches the scaffold; the axe descends, and a head falls into a basket, in the midst of the most atrocious jeerings of the vilest of a vile populace!

Finally, in a hasty and secret execution, where is the example? where is the terror? And then, as the execution takes place, as we may say, privately, in a by-place, with great precipitation, the whole town is ignorant of this bloody and solemn act; nothing announces that, on this day, they are *killing a man*; they laugh and sing at the theatres; the multitude pass on, careless and indifferent. As it regards society, religion, and humanity, this judicial homicide, committed in the name of the *interests of all*, is, however, something which ought to be of importance to *all*. In fine, let us say it again, say it always, here is the sword, but where is the crown?

Beside the punishment show the recompense; then only will the lesson be complete and fruitful. If, on the day following this morn of sorrow and of death, the people, who have seen the blood of a great criminal redden the scaffold, should see the truly virtuous man honoured and rewarded, they would dread as much the punishment of the first, as they would ambitiously covet the triumphs of the last: terror hardly prevents crime, never does it inspire virtue.

Does any one consider the effect of capital punishment on the criminals themselves? Either they brave it with reckless impudence; or, inanimate, they suffer it, half dead with terror; or they offer their heads with profound and sincere repentance.

Now, the punishment is insufficient for those who defy it;

Useless for those who are already morally dead;

Excessive for those who repent with sincerity.

Let us repeat it: society does not kill the murderer to cause him suffering, or to inflict the *lex talionis*; it kills him to prevent him from doing harm; it kills him that the example of his punishment may serve as a warning to murderers to come.

We think that the punishment is barbarous, and that it does not sufficiently terrify.

If this assertion is doubted, we will recall many proved facts of the deep horror expressed by hardened criminals for solitary confinement.

Is it not known that some have committed murders in order to be condemned to death, preferring this punishment to a cell? What, then, would be their horror, when *blindness*, joined to solitary confinement, would deprive them of the hope of escape—a hope which he preserves, and which he sometimes realizes, even in a dungeon and loaded with irons.

And touching this matter, we also think that the abolishment of capital punishment will be one of the forced consequences of solitary confinement; the alarm with which this punishment inspires the generation who at this moment people the prisons and the galleys being such, that many among these incorrigibles prefer to incur the highest penalty known to the law, than imprisonment in a cell; then, doubtless, the punishment of death ought to be suppressed, in order to sweep away this last and frightful alternative.

CHAPTER XX.

MARTIAL AND THE CHOURINEUR.

BEFORE we pursue our narrative, let us say a few words touching the recently-established connexion between the Chourineur and Martial.

As soon as Germain had left the prison, the Chourineur, who easily proved that he had robbed himself, confessed to the judge the reason of this singular deceit, and was set at liberty after receiving a severe and just reproof from the magistrate.

Not having then recovered Fleur de Marie, and wishing to recompense the Chourineur (to whom he already owed his life) for this new act of devotion, Rodolphe, to crown the happiness of his rude protégée, had lodged him in the Hotel of the Rue Plumet, promising him to take him in his suite when he returned to Germany. We have already said that the Chourineur felt for Rodolphe the instinctive and faithful attachment of a dog for his master. To live under the same roof with the prince; to see him sometimes; to await with impatience a new opportunity of sacrificing himself for his interests, were the limits of the ambition and happiness of the Chourineur, who preferred a thousand times this situation, to money and the possession of the farm at Algiers, which Rodolphe had placed at his disposal.

But when the prince had discovered his daughter, all was changed: notwithstanding his lively gratitude towards the man to whom he owed his life, he could not resolve to take with him to Germany this witness of Fleur de Marie's first shame. Determined in any other manner to satisfy the wishes of the Chourineur, he sent for him for the last time, and told him that he expected a new service from his attachment. At these words, the face of the Chourineur brightened, but it soon became clouded when he learned that not only must he not follow the prince to Germany, but that it was necessary for him to leave the hotel that very day.

It is useless to speak of the brilliant compensations that Rodolphe offered to the Chourineur: the money that was designed for him—the deed for the farm in Algiers—anything more that he wished: all was at his disposal. The Chourineur, cut to the heart, refused all; and, for the first time in his life perhaps, this man shed tears. It needed all the persuasion of Rodolphe to induce him to accept his first gifts.

The next day the prince sent for La Louve and Martial; and, without informing them that Fleur de Marie was his daughter, he asked them what he could do for them; all their wishes should be accomplished. Perceiving their hesitation, and remembering what Fleur de Marie had told him about the slightly uncivilized tastes of La Louve and her husband, he offered them either a considerable amount of money, or the half of this amount, and lands in the vicinity of the farm which he had bought for the Chourineur. Both of them rugged, energetic; both endowed with good natural impulses, sympathized the better with each other, since they each had reasons to seek solitude—the one for her past life, the other for the crimes of his family.

He was not deceived: Martial and La Louve accepted his offer with transport; then having, through the intervention of Murphy, made the acquaintance of the Chourineur, they mutually congratulated each other on the agreeable prospects before them in Algiers.

Notwithstanding the deep sadness into which he was plunged; or, rather, in consequence of this sadness, the Chourineur, affected by the cordial advances of Martial and his wife, responded to them with warmth. In a short time a sincere friendship united the future colonists: persons of their temperament form very sudden attachments. La Louve and Martial, being unable, in spite of their kind attentions, to divert the melancholy of their new friend, discontinued their efforts, trusting that the voyage, and the active employment of their future life, would change his thoughts; for, once in Algiers, they would be obliged to turn their attention to the cultivation of the lands which had been bestowed upon them.

These facts established, it will be understood that, informed of the painful interview that Martial was obliged to undergo in obedience to the last wishes of his mother, the Chourineur had wished to accompany his new friend to the gate of Bicêtre, where he awaited him in the coach which had brought them, and which took them back to Paris, after Martial, deeply agitated, had left the dungeon, where the terrible preparations for the execution of his mother and sister were being made.

The physiognomy of the Chourineur was completely altered; the expression of boldness and of happiness which ordinarily characterized his manly face, was replaced with sorrowful dejection: his voice, also, had lost some what of its roughness. Grief, until now a stranger to him, had broken, prostrated his energetic nature.

He looked at Martial with compassion.

"Cheer up," said the Chourineur to him; "you have done all that a brave fellow could do—it is all over; think of your wife, of those children whom you prevented from following the bad example of their parents; and then, besides, this evening we shall have quitted Paris, never to return; and you will never again hear of that which afflicts you."

"It is all the same, do you see, Chourineur. After all, it is my mother—it is my sister."

"But, what would you—this has happened; and when things are unavoidable, we must submit," said the Chourineur, suppressing a sigh.

After a moment's silence, Martial said to him, cordially,

"I, also, ought to console you, my poor fellow—always this melancholy." "Always Martial?"

"Well, my wife and I confidently hope that, once away from Paris, it will be dissipated." "Yes," said the Chourineur, at the expiration of a few seconds, and hardly restraining a shudder, "if I leave Paris—" "But we set out this evening." That is to say, *you*—you go this evening. "And you, then, have you changed your intention recently?" "No." "Well, what then?"

The Chourineur again remained silent; then he replied, struggling to preserve his calmness,

"Hold, Martial: I know that you will laugh at me; but I wish to tell you all, so that, if anything should happen to me, this, at least, will prove that I was not deceived."

"What is it, then?"

"When M. Rodolphe asked if it would be agreeable for us to go together to Algiers, and to be neighbours there, I did not wish to deceive either you or your wife. I told you what I had been." "Let us speak no more about that. You have undergone your punishment—you are as good as the best of us. But I can conceive that, like me, you would prefer to live abroad,

thanks to our generous protector, than to remain here, where, no matter how honest, and how easy in our circumstances we may be, we will always be reproached, you for the crime which you have expiated, and which you still regret; and I for the crimes of my parents, for which I am not responsible. But between us, the past is gone, and gone forever. Be tranquilized; we rely upon you, as you may rely upon us." "Between us, perhaps, the past will be forgotten; but, as I said to Monsieur Rodolphe, do you see, Martial, there is a Providence above, and I have killed a man."

"It is a great misfortune; but, at that time, you did not know what you were doing—you were not yourself; and, besides, you have saved the lives of others, and that ought to count in your favour."

"Listen, Martial: I have now spoken to you of my unhappiness, because, formerly, I often had a dream, in which I saw the sergeant whom I killed; for a long time I have not had this dream; and last night I dreamed it." "It was chance." "No, this forebodes that some misfortune will happen to me this day."

"You are unreasonable, my good comrade."

"I have a presentiment that I shall never quit Paris."

"Once more, you have not common sense. Your sorrow at the thought of quitting our benefactor, the knowledge that you were to accompany me to-day to Bicêtre, where so painful an interview awaited me; all this agitated you last night; hence, naturally, your dream returned to you."

The Chourineur sadly shook his head.

"It has returned to me on the night before the departure of M. Rodolphe, for it is to-day that he goes." "To-day?"

"Yes; yesterday I sent a messenger to his hotel, not daring to go there myself; he has forbidden it. They told him that the prince would set out this morning, at eleven o'clock, by the Barrière Charenton. Thus, when we shall have arrived in Paris, I will prostrate myself there, to endeavour to see him for this last time—the last!"

"He appears so good that I comprehend well how you must love him." "Love him?" said the Chourineur, with deep and passionate emotion; "oh yes! 'allez.' Do you understand, Martial? to sleep on the ground—to eat black bread—to be his dog; but to be where he is. I asked nothing more—it was too much—he did not wish it."

"He has been so generous to you?" "It is not that which makes me love him so much—it is because he said to me that I had *earned* honour; yes, and at a time when I was as ferocious as a wild beast, when I despised myself as the vilest of the vile, he made me comprehend that there was still some good in me, since, my punishment inflicted, I had repented, and after having suffered the utmost extremity of what without being guilty of theft, I had industriously laboured to gain an honest livelihood; wishing to injure no one, although every one looked upon me as a finished scoundrel, which was not very encouraging. It is true, in most instances, all that is necessary to keep one in the right path are words of encouragement and kindness. Is it not so, Martial? Thus, when M. Rodolphe said these words to me, dame! my heart beat high and proudly. Since then I would go through fire to do a good action. Oh that the

opportunity might offer! you would see—and to whom the thanks?—the thanks to M. Rodolphe.”

“Truly, since you are a thousand times better than you used to be, you should not have such evil presentiments. Your dream signifies nothing.”

“Well, we shall see. I do not purposely search for a misfortune; there can be, for me, no greater one than that which has already happened; never to see him more. M. Rodolphe! I who thought never more to quit him. In my sphere, I would have been at his service, body and soul, always ready. Well, perhaps he is wrong. You know, Martial, that I am but an earth-worm in comparison with him; well, sometimes it happens that the most insignificant can be useful to the most powerful. If that should be the case, I would never pardon him for depriving himself of my services.” “Who knows? one day, perhaps, he will recall you.”

“Oh! no! he said to me, ‘My good fellow, you must promise me that you will never endeavour to see me again; by so doing, you will render me a service.’ You understand, Martial, I have promised; on the honour of a man, I will keep my word; but it is hard.”

“Once at our destination, you will forget, by degrees, your sorrow. We will work, we will live retired and tranquil, like good farmers, except occasionally trying our skill, as marksmen, on the Arabs, ah! there, La Louve will help us.”

“If it should come to blows, I am at home there, Martial,” said the Chourineur, slightly animated. “I am unmarried, and I have been a trooper.” “And I a poacher!” “But you—you have a wife, and these two children whom you have adopted. As for me, I have nothing but my hide, and since it can no longer serve as a screen for M. Rodolphe, I have no regard for it. So, if we should be obliged to give them their change, it’s my affair.”

“Ah! we’ll both have something to do with it.”

“No; I alone—thunder! leave the Bedonkias to me.”

“Good; I would rather hear you speak thus than as you did a short time since. Allez, Chourineur, we will be true brothers, and you can converse with me of your sorrow, if it endures, for I have my own. The recollection of this day will last all my life. One cannot see his mother, his sister, as I have seen mine, without forever bearing it in remembrance. Our situations are so similar that it is good for us to be together. We will not fear to look danger in the face; well, we will be half farmers, half soldiers. If we can start any game, we will hunt. If you wish to live alone, you can do so, and we will be near neighbours; if otherwise, we will all live together. We will bring up the children like honest people, and you shall be, almost, their uncle, while we will be brothers. How does it suit you?” said Martial, offering his hand to the Chourineur.

“It suits me well, my good Martial; and then, sorrow shall kill me, or I will kill it, as the saying is.” “It will not kill you—we shall grow old in our wilderness, and every night we will say, brother, thanks to M. Rodolphe; that shall be our prayer for him.”

“Hold, Martial, you put balsam on my wound.”

“Good; this foolish dream, you will think no more of it, I hope?” “I will endeavour; ah!

well, you will call for us at four o’clock? the diligence starts at five.” “It is agreed upon. But here we are in Paris; I will stop the coach, and go on foot to the Barrière Charenton; I will await M. Rodolphe, to see him pass.”

The carriage stopped, and the Chourineur got out.

“Don’t forget, at four o’clock, my good comrade,” said Martial: “at four o’clock!”

The Chourineur had forgotten that it was the morning after the “*sa carême*,” thus he was much surprised at the spectacle, at the same time fantastic and hideous, which was presented to his view when he walked through a part of the exterior boulevard, which he crossed on his way to the Barrière Charenton.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE.

The Chourineur in a few moments was carried along, in spite of himself, by a dense crowd, a popular torrent, which, descending from the taverns of the Faubourg de la Glacière, collected around the approaches to the Barrière, to pour out afterward on the Boulevard Saint Jacques, where the execution was to take place.

Although it was broad daylight, yet still could be heard at a distance the resounding music of the orchestras of the “*guinguettes*,” where, above all, could be distinguished the sonorous vibrations of the “*cornets à piston*.”

It needs the pencil of Gailot, of Rembrandt, or of Goya, to portray the bizarre, hideous, almost fantastical appearance of this multitude. Almost all, men, women, children, were dressed in old masquerading costumes; those who had not been able to obtain this luxury had fastened on their clothes old rags, of flaming colours; some young men were attired in women’s apparel, torn and soiled with mud; all these faces, haggard from debauch and vice, bloated by intoxication, sparkled with savage joy, in thinking that, after a night of drunken orgies, they were going to see the two women put to death, for whom the scaffold was raised.

The scum of the population of Paris, this immense mob was composed of bandits and abandoned women, who demand each day from crime their daily bread, and who each night return well filled to their dens.

The exterior boulevard being very contracted at this place, the closely-packed crowd entirely blocked up the passage-way. In spite of his athletic strength, the Chourineur was obliged to remain almost immovable in the midst of this compact mass; he submitted. The prince, leaving the Rue Plânet at ten o’clock, as they had told him, would not pass the Barrière Charenton until about eleven, and it was not yet seven.

Although formerly he had associated with the degraded classes to which this mob belonged, the Chourineur, on again finding himself among them, felt invincible disgust. Crowded by the reflux of the mob, against the wall of one of the “*guinguettes*,” which swam on these boulevards through the open window from whence escaped the deafening sounds of a brass band, the Chourineur saw, against his will, a strange spectacle

* Public houses outside the barriers.

In a large, low room (one end of which was occupied by the musicians), surrounded by benches and tables covered with the remains of a repast broken plates, and overturned bottles, a dozen of men and women disguised, half drunk, were dancing *La Chahut*, a dance which was never performed except at the end of the ball, when the municipal guards had retired. Among the depraved couples who figured in this revel, the Chourineur remarked two who caused themselves to be applauded above all by the disgusting immodesty of their postures, their gestures, and their words.

The first couple were composed of a man nearly disguised as a bear, by means of a waistcoat and trousers of black sheepskin. The head of the animal, doubtless too heavy to carry, had been replaced by a kind of hood of long hair, which entirely covered the face; two holes near the eyes, and a large slit over the mouth, allowed him to see, to speak, and to breathe. This masked man, one of the prisoners who had escaped from La Force (among whom were also Barbillon and the two murderers arrested at the *tapis-franc*, at the commencement of this story)—this man was Nicolas Marial, the son, the brother of the two women for whom the scaffold was erected, close at hand. Dragged into this act of inhuman insensibility by one of his companions, a formidable bandit, this wretch dared, with the aid of his disguise, to yield himself to the last joys of the carnival.

The woman with whom he danced was dressed as a sutler, with a leather cap rather the worse for wear, the ribands torn, a kind of jacket of faded red cloth, ornamented with three rows of copper buttons, hussar fashion; a green petticoat and pantaloons of white calico; her black hair fell in disorder on her face; her ghastly and livid features expressed impudence and effrontery.

The *vis-à-vis* of these dancers were not less vile.

The man of very tall stature, disguised as *Robert Macaire*, had daubed his bony face with soot in such a manner that he was not recognisable; besides, a large band covered his left eye, and the dead white of the right one, standing out in relief with the black face, made it still more hideous. The lower part of the visage of *Le Squelette* (doubtless he has been recognised) disappeared entirely in a high cravat made of an old red shawl. He wore, according to the tradition, a gray hat, rasped, flattened, dirty, and without a crown; a green coat in tatters; madder-coloured pantaloons, patched in a thousand places, and tied around the ankles with twine; this assassin, overdoing the most grotesque and most impudent positions of the *Chahut*, now to the right, now to the left, backward and forward, with his long limbs hard as iron, folded and unfolded them with so much vigour and elasticity, that one would have said they were hung on springs.

Worthy corypheus of this "*sabernale*," his partner, a tall, brazen creature dressed as a "*debardeur*," wearing a police cap stuck on a powdered wig with a long "*queue*," had on a vest and trousers of green cut velvet, fastened around her waist by an orange scarf, whose long ends floated behind.

A fat, masculine-looking woman, the Ogresse of the *tapis-franc*, seated on one of the benches, held on her lap the Tartan mantles of this creature and of the sutler, while they danced with their worthy companions.

Among the other dancers was remarked a little cripple dressed as a devil with the aid of a "*tricot noir*" much too large for him, red drawers, and a horrible and grinning green mask. Notwithstanding his infirmity, this little monster was of surprising agility; his precocious depravity reached, if it did not surpass, that of his frightful companions, and he gambolled away, with equal effrontery, opposite to his partner, a fat woman disguised as a shepherdess, who excited still more the impudence of her partner by her shouts of laughter.

No charge being brought against Tortillard, and Bras-Rouge having been provisionally left in prison, the child, on the demand of his father, had been reclaimed by Micou the receiver.

As secondary figures of the picture which we have endeavoured to paint, let the reader imagine all that is of the lowest, the most shameless, the most monstrous in this idle, reckless, rapacious, sanguinary debauch, which shows itself more and more hostile to the social order, and to which we have wished to call the attention of reflecting persons on terminating this recital.

May this last and horrible scene symbolize the imminent peril which continually menaces society!

Yes, let one reflect that the cohesion, the dreaded increase of this race of robbers and murderers is a kind of living protest against the defects of restraining laws, and, above all, against the absence of preventive measures, of provident legislation, of preservative institutions, destined to overlook and guard from infancy this crowd of unfortunates, abandoned or perverted by frightful examples. Once more, these disinherited beings, whom God has made neither better nor worse than his other creatures, do not become thus incurably corrupted but in the filth of misery, ignorance, and brutality, where they crawl into existence.

* * * * *

Still more excited by the laughter, by the bravos of the crowd collected at the windows, the actors of the abominable orgies which we now relate shouted to the orchestra to play a last "*galop*."

The musicians, delighted at the prospect of a termination to their labours, yielded to the general wish, and played with energy a lively "*galop*."

At the vibrating sounds of the brazen instruments, the excitement increased, the dancers appeared to be seized with a sort of phrensy, and, following *Le Squelette* and his partner, commenced "*une ronde infernale*," uttering savage shouts.

A thick dust, raised by these furious shufflings, arose from the floor, and cast a kind of red cloud around this whirlwind of men and women, who turned with giddy rapidity.

Soon, for these heads excited by wine, by the rapid motion, by their own cries, it was no longer inebriety—it was delirium; it was phrensy; room was wanting. *Le Squelette* cried with a breathless voice,

"Clear the door! We are going out—up on the boulevard."

"Yes, yes!" cried the dense crowd at the windows, "a '*galop*' to the *Barrière Saint Jacques*!"

"It will soon be time for them to shorten the two '*largues*'" (the two women.)

"The executioner throws doublets; it is droll!"

"Accompanied by the '*cornet à piston*.'"

"We will dance the cotillon of the guillotine!"

"Go ahead of the woman without any head!"

cried Tortillard.

"This will enliven the condemned."

"I invite the widow."

"I invite the daughter."

"That will make old Charlot* gay."

"He will dance '*La Chahut*' in his shop with his customers."

"Death to the *pantes* (honest people). Long live the *grinches* and *escarpes*!" (robbers and assassins), cried Le Squelette, in a roaring voice.

These jests, these cannibal threats, accompanied by vulgar songs, cries, whistlings, shouts, were augmented still more when the band of Le Squelette had made, by its impetuous violence, a large opening through the middle of this compact crowd.

Then it was a frightful *mêlée*; then were heard howlings, imprecations, and bursts of mad laughter, which no longer appeared human.

The tumult was suddenly carried to its height by two new incidents.

The vehicle containing the condemned, accompanied by its escort of cavalry, appeared in the distance at the corner of the boulevard; then all the mob rushed in this direction, uttering a howl of ferocious satisfaction.

At this moment, also, the crowd was met by a courier coming from the Boulevard des Invalides, and galloping towards the Barrière de Charenton. He was dressed in a light blue jacket, with a yellow collar, laced with silver on all the seams; but as a sign of deep mourning, he wore black breeches, with heavy boots; his cap, also, bordered with silver, was surrounded with a crape. In fine, on his blinds were, in relief, the sovereign arms of Gerolstein.

The courier walked his horse; but his progress becoming more and more embarrassed, he was almost obliged to stop when he found himself in the midst of the crowd of which we have spoken. Although he cried "Take care!" and guided his horse with the greatest precaution, cries, threats, abuses, soon arose against him.

"Does he want to get on our backs with his camel, this fellow?"

"What a silver plate on his body—thank you!" cried Tortillard, under his green mask with a red tongue.

"If he gives us impudence, let us put him on his feet."

"And we'll cut off the '*galuches*' of his jacket to melt them," said Nicolas.

"And we'll rip you open if you are not satisfied, dirty footman," added Le Squelette, addressing the courier, and seizing the bridle of his horse, for the crowd had become so dense that the bandit had relinquished his project of dancing to the barrière.

The courier, a vigorous and resolute man, said to Le Squelette, raising the handle of his whip, "If you do not let go the bridle of my horse, I will cut you across the face."

"You, you pitiful scoundrel?"

"Yes; I am walking my horse; I cry, Take care! you have no right to stop me. The carriage of my lord follows me. I already hear the cracking of the whips. Let me pass."

"Your lord?" said Le Squelette. "What is he to me—your lord? I will knock him down if it pleases me. I never have stabbed a lord: this gives me the desire to do it."

"There are no more lords—'*Vive la Charlot*'!"

cried Tortillard, and humming these lines of the *Parisienne*, "*En avant, marchons contre leurs canons*," he caught hold of one of the courier's boots, and bearing with all his weight, made him tremble in his seat. A blow with the handle of his whip on the head of Tortillard paid him for his audacity. But immediately the enraged populace threw themselves upon the courier; he dashed the spurs into the sides of his horse, and endeavoured to disengage himself, but could not succeed; neither was he able to draw his hunting-knife. Dismounted, thrown backward, amid their cries and enraged shouts, he would have been killed had it not been for the arrival of Rodolphe's carriage, which diverted the attention of these wretches.

For some time the "*coupé*" of the prince, drawn by four post-horses, went only on a walk, and one of the two footmen in mourning (on account of Sarah's death) seated behind had prudently descended, and stood near one of the doors, the carriage being a very low one. The postillions cried, "Take care!" and advanced with caution.

Rodolphe, as well as his daughter, was dressed in deep mourning; holding one of her hands, he looked at her with unspeakable happiness; the sweet and charming face of Fleur de Marie appeared to advantage in her little black crape bonnet, which set off her fair complexion and the brilliant tints of her beautiful flaxen hair; one would have said that the azure of this fine day was reflected in her large eyes, which never had been of a softer and more transparent blue. Although her sweetly-smiling face expressed calmness and happiness, yet, when she looked at her father, a shade of melancholy, sometimes even of indefinable sadness, cast its shadow on the features of Fleur de Marie, when the eyes of her father were turned away.

"You are displeased at my calling you so early this morning, and for having advanced the moment of departure?" said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Oh! no, my father—the morning is so beautiful!"

"That was my thought; and our day's journey will be better divided by leaving early, and you will be less fatigued. Murphy, my aide-de-camp, and the carriage with your women, will join us at our first stopping-place, where you will repose."

"Dear father, it is I only of whom you are always thinking."

"Yes, mademoiselle, it is impossible for me to have any other thought," said the prince, smiling; then he added, with a burst of tenderness, "Oh! I love you so much—I love you so much—your forehead—quick."

Fleur de Marie leaned towards her father, and Rodolphe kissed her beautiful forehead.

It was at this moment that the carriage, approaching the crowd, had lessened its speed.

Rodolphe, much astonished, let down the window, and said in German to the footman who stood near the door, "Well! Franz, what is the matter? what is this tumult?"

"Monseigneur, there is such a crowd that the horses cannot move."

"And what is the reason of the crowd?"

"Monseigneur, I have just heard that there is an execution about to take place."

"Ah! this is frightful!" cried Rodolphe, throwing himself back in the carriage.

"What is the matter, my father?" said Fleur de Marie, with anxiety.

* The executioner.

"Nothing—nothing, my child."

"But these threatening cries—do you hear? they approach. What is that, *mon Dieu*?"

"Frantz, order the postillions to turn and go to Charenton by another road, whatever it may be," said Rodolphe.

"Monseigneur, it is too late; we are in the crowd. They have stopped the horses. Some ill-looking people—" The footman could not say another word. The crowd, exasperated by the sanguinary shouts of Le Squelette and Nicolas, suddenly surrounded the carriage. In spite of the efforts and threats of the postillions, the horses were stopped, and Rodolphe saw himself surrounded on all sides by horrible, threatening, and furious faces; pre-eminent among all, from his great height, was Le Squelette, who advanced to the door of the carriage.

"My father, take care!" cried Fleur de Marie, throwing her arms around Rodolphe's neck.

"It is you, then, who are the lord?" said Le Squelette, thrusting his hideous head into the carriage.

At this insolence, Rodolphe would have given way to the natural violence of his character, had it not been for the presence of his daughter; but he restrained himself, and answered coolly, "What do you want? Why do you stop my carriage?"

"Because it pleases us," said Le Squelette, placing his bony hands on the door. "Every one in his turn: yesterday you trampled on the '*canaille*'; to-day the '*canaille*' will trample on you, if you stir."

"My father, we are lost!" murmured Fleur de Marie, in a low voice.

"Compose yourself—I comprehend," said the prince; "it is the last day of the Carnival. These people are drunk. I will soon get rid of them."

"We must make him get out; and his woman also," cried Nicolas. "Why should they trample on poor folks?"

"You appear to be drunk, and doubtless have a desire to drink more," said Rodolphe, taking a purse from his pocket. "Here, this is for you; do not detain my carriage any longer." And he threw him his purse. Tortillard caught it.

"Exactly; you are going a journey; your pockets must be well lined, so hand out some more money, or I will kill you. I have nothing to risk. I ask you for your money or your life in broad daylight. It is a farce," said Le Squelette, completely intoxicated with wine and rage; and he roughly opened the door.

The patience of Rodolphe was exhausted; uneasy for Fleur de Marie, whose alarm increased at each moment, and thinking that a decided stand would overawe this wretch, whom he thought intoxicated, he sprang from his carriage to seize Le Squelette by the throat. At first, the latter drew back quickly, taking from his pocket a long knife; then he threw himself upon Rodolphe.

Fleur de Marie, seeing the poniard of the bandit raised against her father, uttered a piercing cry, sprang out of the carriage, and clasped her arms around him.

Without the aid of the Chourineur, they would have perished. He, at the commencement of this affray, having recognised the livery of the prince, had succeeded, after superhuman efforts, in approaching Le Squelette. At the moment that he threatened the prince with his

knife, the Chourineur, with one hand, arrested the arm of the brigand, and with the other he seized him by the throat, and threw him over backward.

Although taken by surprise, Le Squelette turned, recognised the Chourineur, and cried, "The man with the gray blouse of *La Force*! this time I kill you;" and throwing himself furiously on the Chourineur, he plunged the knife in his bosom.

The Chourineur staggered, but did not fall: the crowd supported him.

"The guard! here is the guard!" cried several voices.

At these words, at the sight of the assassination of the Chourineur, the dense crowd, fearing to be compromised in the murder, dispersed as by enchantment, and fled in all directions.

When the guard arrived, guided by the courier, who had succeeded in making his escape when the mob had abandoned him to surround the carriage of the prince, there only remained on the theatre of this mournful scene, Rodolphe, his daughter, and the Chourineur covered with blood. The two footmen of the prince had seated him on the ground, with his back against a tree.

All this had passed a thousand times more rapidly than it is possible to write it, at some steps from the "*guinguette*," whence had issued Le Squelette and his band.

The prince, pale and agitated, supported the fainting Fleur de Marie in his arms, while the postillions readjusted the traces, which had been injured.

"Quick!" said the prince to his people, who were occupied in assisting the Chourineur. "Carry this unfortunate man into this tavern. And you," added he, addressing his courier, "get on the box, and drive with all speed to the hotel for Doctor David. He was not to leave before eleven o'clock: you will find him there."

Some minutes afterward, the carriage was rapidly driven off, and the two domestics carried the Chourineur into the saloon where the orgies had taken place, and where still remained some of the women who had figured in it.

"My poor child," said Rodolphe to his daughter, "I will lead you to a chamber in this house, and you will await me there: for I cannot abandon solely to the care of my people this courageous man, who has once more saved my life."

"Oh! my father, I entreat you, do not leave me!" cried Fleur de Marie with alarm, clinging to the arm of Rodolphe. "Do not leave me alone. I would die with fear. I will go where you go—"

"But this is a frightful sight!"

"But, thanks to this man, you live for me, my father; at least, permit me to unite with you in thanking and consoling him."

The perplexity of the prince was great: his daughter seemed so much alarmed at remaining alone, that he was obliged to allow her to accompany him to the room where the Chourineur had been carried. The master of the "*guinguette*," assisted by several of the women who had remained (among whom was the *Ogresse* of the *tapis-franc*), had in haste laid the wounded man upon a mattress, and then stanching his wound with napkins. The Chourineur had just opened his eyes, when Rodolphe entered. At the sight of the prince his countenance, of death-like paleness, brightened up a little; he smiled painfully, and said to him, in a feeble voice,

"Ah, Monsieur Rodolphe! how fortunate it was that I was there!"

"Brave and devoted—as always," said the prince to him in a mournful voice: "you save me again!"

"I was going to the Barrière de Charenton—to see you depart—happily—I was stopped here by the crowd—besides, this was to happen to me—I said so to Martial—I had a presentiment."

"A presentiment!"

"Yes, Monsieur Rodolphe—the dream of the sergeant—last night I had it—"

"Forget these ideas. Hope: your wound will not be mortal."

"Oh! yes—Le Squelette has struck home. Never mind, I was right—to say to Martial—that an earthworm like me could sometimes be—useful—to a great lord like you—"

"But it is life—life!—that I owe you again."

"We are quits, Monsieur Rodolphe. You told me that I had heart and honour. These words—*voilà tout*—Oh! I suffocate, monseigneur—without you—command—do me the honour—of—your hand—I feel that I am going—"

"No, it is impossible!" cried the prince, bending over the Chourineur, and pressing in his hands the icy fingers of the dying man. "No; you will live—you will live!"

"Monsieur Rodolphe—do you see that there is something—up there—I have killed—with a blow of the knife?" said the Chourineur, in a voice more and more feeble and indistinct.

At this moment his eyes were fixed on Fleur de Marie, whom he had not yet perceived. Astonishment was painted on his dying face; he started, and said,

"Ah! mon Dieu! La Goualeuse."

"Yes, she is my daughter. She blesses you for having preserved her father."

"She—your daughter! here—that reminds me of our acquaintance—Monsieur Rodolphe—and the—blows with the fists—at the end—but—this—blow with the knife—will be also—the blow—of the end. I have *chourinés*—they—*chourinés*—it is just."

Then he uttered a deep sigh, his head falling backward—he was dead!

The noise of horses resounded without; the carriage of Rodolphe had met that of Murphy and David, who, in their eagerness to rejoin the prince, had hastened their departure. David and the squire entered.

"David," said Rodolphe, wiping away his tears, and pointing to the Chourineur, "is there no hope?"

"None, monseigneur," said the doctor, after a minute's examination. During this minute, a mute but frightful scene passed between Fleur de Marie and the Ogresse, which Rodolphe had not noticed. When the Chourineur pronounced in a low tone the name of La Goualeuse, the Ogresse, raising her head, had quickly seen Fleur de Marie. Already the horrible woman had recognised Rodolphe in the person whom they called monseigneur. He called La Goualeuse his daughter. Such a transformation stupefied the Ogresse, who kept her staring eyes obstinately fixed on her former victim.

Fleur de Marie, pale and alarmed, seemed fascinated by this look. The death of the Chourineur, the unexpected appearance of the Ogresse, who had just awakened more grievously than ever the remembrance of her former degradation, seemed to her of mournful presage. From this moment, Fleur de Marie was struck with one of those presentiments which often have, on characters like hers, an irresistible influence.

A short time after these sad events, Rodolphe and his daughter had left Paris forever.

THE END

TO THE PUBLIC.

The publishers of Alison's History of Europe having completed their reprint, from the third London edition, would remind the purchasers of the preceding numbers, and also their friends who have been waiting to procure the work entire, that the author's narrative is now presented to them *unmutilated*. Any change or omission, unsanctioned by the author, would so disparage the original work, that its chief recommendations and its intrinsic value would be sacrificed.

The seventy-sixth chapter, on the last war between the United States and Great Britain, contained some mistakes, which rendered it advisable, in conformity with Mr. Alison's own desire, to correct those errors of fact, as well as his inadequate delineations of our Republican institutions. Chancellor Kent having transmitted to Mr. Alison a packet of critical remarks, kindly gave us a copy of them, which, with Mr. Alison's corrections, have been inserted in the present edition. A series of explanatory notes has also been appended, which have been approved by competent judges, and tend materially to rectify Mr. Alison's principal errors, and to enhance the value of the narrative.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH OF

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GEROLSTEIN.

A SEQUEL TO THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS.

PART VIII. AND LAST.

CHAPTER I.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN—OLDENZAAL TO
COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

Oldenzaal, August 23, 1840.*

I HAVE just returned from Gêrolstein, where I have passed three months with the grand-duke and his family. I expected to have found a letter announcing your arrival at Oldenzaal, my dear Maximilian. Imagine my grief, my surprise, when I understood that you would be detained in Hungary several weeks longer.

I have not been able to write to you for four months, not knowing how to direct my letters to you, thanks to your original and adventurous manner of travelling, and yet you had, nevertheless, seriously promised me at Vienna, at the moment of our separation, that you would be at Oldenzaal the first of August. I must, then, renounce the pleasure of seeing you; and never had I more desire to pour out my heart into yours, my good Maximilian, my oldest friend; for though we are both still young, our friendship is old—it dates from our infancy.

What shall I say to you? Within three months a great revolution has taken place in me. I have reached one of those moments which decide a man's fate. Judge if I do not want your presence, your advice. But you will not fail me much longer; whatever concerns detain you in Hungary, you will come, Maximilian; you must come, I conjure you, for I shall, indeed, need the most earnest consolation, and I cannot go to you. My father, whose health becomes more and more feeble, has recalled me from Gêrolstein. He grows weaker every day. It is impossible for me to leave him.

I have so much to tell you, that I shall be prolix, for I have to recount to you the most painful, the most romantic incident of my life.

Strange and sad chance! during this period we are fatally distant from each other; we, inseparables, we, two brothers, both of us the most fervent apostles of thrice holy friendship, we, who were so proud of proving that the Cezias and the Posa of our Schiller are not idealities, and that, like these divine creations of the great

poet, we know how to taste the sweet delights of a tender and mutual attachment!

Oh, my friend, why were you not there, why were you not there! For three months my heart has been overflowing with emotions, at the same time inexpressibly sweet and sad. And I was alone; I am alone now. Pity me; you, who know my sensibility, at times so fancifully expansive; you, who have often seen my eyes moistened with tears at the simple recital of a generous action, at the simple view of a beautiful sunset, or in a quiet and starry summer night. You remember the past year, during our excursion to the ruins of Oppensfeld—the borders of the great lake—our silent reveries during that magnificent evening, so calm, so poetical, so serene.

Strange contrast! it was three days before that bloody duel, in which I would not take you for my second, for I should have suffered too much for you if I had been wounded under your eyes—that duel, for a quarrel at play, in which my second unfortunately killed that young Frenchman, the Viscount St. Rémy. Apropos, do you know what has become of that dangerous siren St. Rémy brought to Oppensfeld, and whose name was, I think, Cecily David?

You will smile with pity, my friend, to see me wander thus among these vague remembrances of the past, instead of proceeding to the grave confessions which I have announced to you; it is because, in spite of myself, I recoil from these confessions; I know your severity; I am afraid of being scolded, yes, scolded, because, instead of having acted with reflection, with wisdom (alas for the wisdom of one-and-twenty!), I have acted foolishly, or, rather, I have not acted at all; I have suffered myself to be borne along blindly on the current which carried me forward. It is only since my return from Gêrolstein that I have, so to speak, awakened from the enchanting vision in which I have been cradled for the last three months, and this waking is sad.

Come then, my friend, good Maximilian, I assume my best courage. Hear me with indulgence. I begin by casting down my eyes; I dare not look at you, for as you read these lines your features will become so grave, so severe. Stoical man!

Having obtained leave of absence for six months, I left Vienna, and remained here some time with my father; his health was then good, and he advised me to go and visit my excellent

* The reader is reminded that about fifteen months have passed since the day when Rodolphe quitted Paris by the Barrier St. Jacques, after the murder of the Chourineur.

aunt, Princess Julianna, the superior of the Abbey of Gerolstein. I have told you, I believe, my friend, that my grandmother was cousin-german of the grandfather of the present grand-duke; and that the latter, Gustavus Rodolphe, on account of this relationship, has always treated my father and myself very kindly, very affectionately, as cousins. You know, also, I believe, that during a very long journey which the prince recently made into France, he gave to my father the charge of the government of the grand duchy.

You will believe that it is not from any pride, my friend, that I mention these circumstances to you; it is only by way of explanation of the causes of the extreme intimacy in which I lived with the grand-duke and his family during my stay at Gerolstein.

You recollect that last year, during our journey on the banks of the Rhine, we were informed that the prince had found in France, and had married in *extremis*, the Countess M^cGregor, in order to legitimize the birth of a daughter whom he had by her, in consequence of an early secret marriage, which was afterward broken, from some illegality in the ceremony, and because it had been contracted against the will of the reigning grand-duke.

This young daughter, so solemnly acknowledged, is that charming Princess Amelia,* of whom Lord Dudley, who saw her at Gerolstein about a year since, spoke to us so often at Vienna, last winter. You recollect, we accused him of exaggeration. Strange chance! If any one had then told me—

But though you have undoubtedly now almost divined my secret, let me follow the march of events without interruption.

The Convent of Saint Hermangilde, of which my aunt is the abbess, is hardly a quarter of a league distant from Gerolstein, for the abbey gardens border on the suburbs of the city. A charming house, completely isolated from the cloister, had been placed at my disposition by my aunt, who loves me, as you know, with a maternal tenderness.

The day of my arrival she informed me that there was the next day to be a solemn reception and court ceremony; the grand-duke on that day was to make the official announcement of his approaching marriage with the Marchioness d'Herville, who had recently arrived at Gerolstein, accompanied by her father, the Count Orbigny.†

Some blame the prince for not having sought a sovereign alliance in his marriage (the grand-duchess, the former wife of the prince, belonged to the house of Bavaria); others, on the contrary, and my aunt is of the number of these, congratulate him for having preferred a young and amiable woman whom he adores, and who belongs to the highest nobility of France, to considerations of ambition. You know, moreover, my friend, that my aunt having always en-

tertained for the Grand-duke Rodolphe the most profound attachment, she can appreciate, better than any one else, the eminent qualities of the prince.

"My dear child," said she to me on occasion of this solemn reception, which I was to attend the day after my arrival, "my dear child, the most remarkable part of this fête will undoubtedly be the *Pearl of Gerolstein*."

"Who do you mean, my dear aunt?"

"The Princess Amelia."

"The daughter of the grand-duke! Lord Dudley told us about her at Vienna. He spoke of her with an enthusiasm which we called poetical exaggeration."

"At my age, with my character, and in my position," replied my aunt, "one is not easily excited; and you will believe my judgment to be impartial, my dear child. Indeed, I assure you, that in my whole life I never knew anything so enchanting as the Princess Amelia. I might speak to you of her angelic beauty, if she were not endowed with an inexpressible charm which is superior even to her beauty. Figure to yourself candour with dignity, and grace in modesty. From the first day in which the grand-duke presented me to her, I felt for this young princess an involuntary sympathy. Nor am I alone in this opinion. The Arch-duchess Sophia has been at Gerolstein for some days; she is the proudest and most haughty princess whom I know."

"Very true, my aunt, her irony is terrible; few persons escape her biting pleasantries. At Vienna, she was dreaded like the fire. Can the Princess Amelia have found favour with her?"

"The other day she came here after having visited the House of Refuge which is placed under the superintendence of the young princess. 'Do you know one thing,' said this dreaded archduchess to me, with her abrupt frankness; 'I have a mind singularly disposed to satire, have I not? Well, if I were to live long with the daughter of the grand-duke, I should become, I am sure, inoffensive; her goodness is so penetrating, so contagious.'"

"But is my cousin, then, an enchantress?" said I to my aunt, smiling.

"Her most powerful attraction, in my eyes, at least," replied my aunt, "is that mingling of gentleness, modesty, and dignity, of which I have spoken to you, and which gives the most touching expression to her angelic face."

"Modesty is certainly a rare quality in a princess so young, so beautiful, so happy."

"Remember, too, my dear child, how much better it is for the Princess Amelia to enjoy, without vain ostentation, the high position which is incontestably acquired for her: her elevation is recent."*

"In her conversations with you, dear aunt, has the princess ever made any allusions to her past fortunes?"

"No; but when, notwithstanding my advanced age, I have spoken to her with the respect which is due to her, since her royal highness is the daughter of our sovereign, her ingenuous distress, mingled with gratitude and veneration for me, have deeply moved me; for

* As the name of Marie recalled to Rodolphe and his daughter such sad recollections, he had given her the name of Amelia, after his mother.

† The reader is reminded, in order to maintain the probability of this narrative, that the last Princess of Courland, a lady as remarkable for the singular superiority of her mind as for the charm of her character, and the admirable goodness of her heart, was Mademoiselle de Modem.

* On arriving in Germany, Rodolphe had said that Fleur de Marie, whom he had long supposed dead, had never quitted her mother, the Countess Sarah.

her reserve, at the same time noble and affable, proved to me that the present did not intoxicate her so much as to make her forget the past, and that she rendered to my age what I granted to her rank."

"You must have an exquisite tact, my dear aunt, to observe such delicate shades."

"Thus, my dear child, the more I have seen of the Princess Amelia, the more I have felt my first impression confirmed. Since she has been here, the good works she has accomplished are incredible, and she has done it all with a reflection, a maturity of judgment which amazes me in a person of her age. Judge of them: at her request, the grand-duke has founded at Gerolstein an establishment for little orphan girls of five or six years old, and for young girls, also orphans or abandoned by their parents, who have reached the age of sixteen, an age so fatal for the unfortunate who have no one to defend them from the seductions of vice or the pressure of want. The noble nuns of my abbey teach and direct the daughters of this house. In going to visit it, I have often occasion to observe the adoration which these poor disinherited creatures entertain towards the Princess Amelia. Every day she goes to pass several hours in this establishment, which is placed under her especial protection; and I repeat to you, my child, it is not only respect, gratitude, that these poor girls and the nuns feel for her highness, it is almost fanaticism."

"The Princess Amelia must be an angel," replied I to my aunt.

"An angel—yes, an angel," replied she "for, you cannot imagine with what melting goodness she treats her *protégés*, and with what pious solicitude she watches over them—I have never seen the susceptibility of misfortune more delicately treated, it seems as if an irresistible sympathy especially attracts the princess towards this class of the abandoned poor. Finally, would you believe it, she, the daughter of a sovereign, never calls these young girls any thing but *my sisters*."

At these last words of my aunt, I confess it to you, Maximilian, the tears came into my eyes. Do you not find something beautiful and holy in this conduct of the princess? You know my sincerity, I protest to you that I report to you as I will always report to you, the conversation of my aunt, almost word for word.

"Since the princess," said I to her, "is so marvellously endowed, I shall feel great embarrassment when I am presented to her to-morrow; you know my insurmountable timidity, you know that elevation of character overpowered me more even than that of rank, I am sure I shall appear to the princess as stupid as embarrassed; I know this well enough beforehand."

"Come, come," said my aunt smiling, "she will take pity on you, my dear child, and the more so as you will not be a new acquaintance to her."

"Dear aunt."

"Certainly."

"How so?"

"You recollect that when at the age of sixteen years, you quitted Oldenzaal to make a journey to Russia and England with your father, I had your portrait painted in the costume

which you wore at the first fancy ball given by the late grand-duchess?"

"Yes, the costume of a German page of the sixteenth century."

"Our excellent painter Fritz Mokker, while he faithfully re-produced your features, not only retraced a personage of the sixteenth century, but, with the caprice of an artist, he amused himself with imitating even the manner and the appearance of an age of pictures painted soon after that period. A few days after her arrival in Germany, the Princess Amelia having come to visit me with her father, remarked your portrait, and asked me with great simplicity what this charming picture of the olden time was? Her father smiled, and making a signal to me, answered her, 'This portrait is that of one of our cousins, you see by his costume, my dear Amelia, of some three hundred years date. When he was very young he exhibited a rare courage and an excellent heart. Does he not, in fact, display bravery in his bearing, and goodness in his smile?'"

(I beg you, Maximilian, do not shrug your shoulder with impatient disdain, at my writing such things about myself. It is hard for me to do it, you may suppose, but the sequel of this narrative will prove to you that these puerile details, of which I feel the bitter ridicule, are unfortunately indispensable. I close the parenthesis, and go on.)

"The Princess Amelia," continued my aunt, "the dupe of this innocent pleasantry, agreed in opinion with her father, respecting the gentle and proud expression of your physiognomy, after having attentively examined the portrait. Afterwards when I went to see her at Gerolstein, she smilingly asked me the news of her cousin of the olden time. I then owned to her our deception, telling her that the fair page of the sixteenth century, was simply my nephew, Prince Henry d'Herkausen—Oldenzaal, now twenty-one years of age, Captain of his Majesty the Emperor of Austria's guards, and in everything excepting the costume, very like his portrait. At these words, the Princess Amelia, added my aunt, blushed and became again serious, as she almost always is. Since then, she has not spoken to me again about the picture. Nevertheless, you see, my dear child, that you will not be entirely a stranger and a new face to *your cousin*, as the grand-duke calls you. So take courage and sustain the honour of your portrait," added my aunt smiling.

This conversation took place, as I have told you, my dear Maximilian, on the eve of the day when I was to be presented to the princess, my cousin. I then left my aunt, and returned to my apartment.

I have never hidden from you my most secret thoughts, good or evil, I am therefore about to confess to you what absurd and foolish imaginations I allowed myself to indulge in after the conversation which I have just reported to you.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE HENRY D'HERKAUSEN—OLDENZAAL TO
COUNT MAXIMILIAN KAMINETZ.

You have often told me, my dear Maximilian,

that I have no vanity; I believe that is true, and must believe so, to be able to continue this account without exposing myself to the charge of presumptuousness in your eyes.

When I was alone at home, in recalling my aunt's conversation, I could not help dreaming over with a secret satisfaction the fact that the Princess Amelia having observed the portrait of me, made six or seven years ago, had asked a few days after, in jest, for news of her cousin of the olden time. I acknowledged that nothing was more foolish than to found the least hope upon such an insignificant circumstance; but, as I told you, I shall always use the most entire frankness with you; this insignificant circumstance ravished me. Undoubtedly the praises which I had heard lavished upon the Princess Amelia by a woman as grave and austere as my aunt, while they raised the princess still higher in my eyes, rendered me yet more sensible to the distinction which she had deigned to bestow upon me, or, rather, had granted to my portrait. However, as I tell you, this distinction awakened in me such foolish hopes, that now, in throwing back a calmer glance upon the past, I ask how I could have allowed myself to be drawn on to those thoughts which inevitably bordered upon a precipice.

Although a relation of the grand-duke, and always kindly welcomed by him, it was impossible for me to conceive of the least hope of marriage with the princess, even if she had accepted my love, which was still more improbable. Our family holds an honourable rank, but it is poor, if we compare our fortune with the immense domains of the grand-duke, the richest prince of the Germanic Confederation; and then, I was hardly twenty-one years old; I was a mere captain in the Guards, without renown, without personal reputation; never, in short, would the grand-duke dream of me for his daughter.

All these reflections should have preserved me from a passion which as yet I did not feel, but of which I had, so to speak, a singular presentiment. Alas! I gave myself up, on the contrary, to new childishness. I was wearing on my finger a ring which was formally given me by Thekla (the good countess, whom you know); although this token of careless and frivolous love could not trouble me much, I heroically made of it a sacrifice to my newborn love, and the poor ring disappeared in the water which flows rapidly under my window.

It is useless to tell you what a night I passed; you can imagine it. I knew that the Princess Amelia was fair, and of angelic beauty; I endeavoured to imagine her features, her stature, her demeanour, the sound of her voice, the expression of her countenance; then, remembering my portrait which she had remarked upon, I recollected with regret that the cursed artist had flattered me; besides, in despair, I compared the picturesque costume of a page of the fifteenth century with the severe uniform of His Imperial Majesty's captain of the Guards. Then to these foolish ideas succeeded now and then, I assure you my friend, some generous thoughts, some noble impulses of the soul; I felt myself moved—yes! deeply moved at the remembrances of what my aunt had told me of that adorable goodness of the Princess Amelia,

who called the poor abandoned ones whom she protected—*her sisters*.

"In fine—odd and inexplicable contrast—I have, you know, the most humble opinion of myself—and I was, nevertheless, proud enough to suppose that the sight of my portrait had struck the princess; I had good sense enough to understand that an impassable distance separated me from her for ever, and yet I asked myself, with real anxiety, whether she would not find me unworthy of my portrait. In short, I had never seen her; I was convinced beforehand that she would hardly look upon me; and, nevertheless, I thought myself right in sacrificing to her the pledge of my former love.

"I passed in real suffering the night of which I speak, and a part of the next day. The hour of reception arrived. I tried on two or three uniforms, finding each worse than the other, and set out for the palace of the grand-duke, much displeased with myself.

"Although Gerolstein is hardly a quarter of a league from the Abbey of St. Hermangilda, during the short drive a thousand thoughts assailed me: all the nonsense with which I had busied myself disappeared before a grave, sad, almost threatening idea; an invincible presentiment forewarned me of one of those crises which govern the whole life; a sort of revelation told me that I was about to love, to love passionately, to love as one loves but once; and, to heighten the fatality, this love, so highly and worthily placed, was always to be unfortunate to me.

These ideas alarmed me so much, that I suddenly took the wise resolution of stopping my carriage, returning to the abbey, and going to rejoin my father, leaving to my aunt the duty of excusing me to the grand-duke for my abrupt departure.

Unfortunately, one of those vulgar causes, of which the effects are sometimes so immense, prevented me from executing this. My carriage having stopped at the entrance of the avenue leading to the palace, I leaned out at the window to give orders to my people to return, when the Baron and Baroness Koller, who, like me, were on their way to court, perceived me, and ordered their carriage also to stop. The baron, seeing me in uniform, said, "Can I assist you in anything, my dear prince? what has happened to you? Since you are on your way to the palace, will you not join us, if anything has happened to your horses?"

Nothing could have been more easy, you may say, my friend, than for me to have made some excuse for leaving the baron, and to have regained the abbey. I suppose it is so; but whether it was weakness, or a secret desire to escape from the salutary resolution I had just formed, I replied, with an embarrassed air; that I was giving orders to my coachman to inquire at the gate of the palace whether we entered by the new pavilion, or through the marble court. "The entrance is through the marble court, my dear prince," replied the baron; "it is a grand gala reception. Tell your coachman to follow mine, I will show you the way."

You know, Maximilian, how much of a fatalist I am; I would have returned to the abbey, to spare myself the vexations which I foresaw; fate opposed it; I abandoned myself to my stars

You do not know the grand ducal palace of Gerolstein, my friend. According to all those who have visited the capitals of Europe, there is not, with the exception of Versailles, a royal residence, of which the whole pile of buildings, and the avenues to it, have a more majestic aspect. If I enter into some details on this subject, it is that, in recalling at this hour these imposing splendours, I ask myself why they did not all at first call up my nothingness; for the Princess Amelia was the daughter of the sovereign of this palace, of these guards, of this great wealth.

The court of marble, a vast hemicycle, is so called, because, with the exception of a broad path around it, in which the carriages pass, it is paved with marble of every colour, having magnificent mosaics. In the centre of it is placed an immense basin of antique marble, fed by abundant springs of water, which falls continually into a large porphyry vase.

This court of honour is surrounded by a row of white marble statues, of the finest execution, bearing torches of gilded bronze, from whence floods of dazzling gas are poured out. Alternating with these statues, Medicean vases, raised on their richly-sculptured pedestals, contain enormous rose-laurels, real flourishing shrubs, whose lustrous foliage, seen in the resplendent light, shines with a metallic verdure.

The carriages stopped at the foot of a double row of balustrades, which led to the peristyle of the palace; at the foot of this staircase, two cavaliers of the guard of the grand-duke, mounted on black horses, stood as sentries. The soldiers of the guard were chosen from among the largest-sized under-officers of the army. You, my friend, who are so fond of military men, would have been struck with the severe and martial air of these two colossal figures, whose cuirasses and brazen casques of an antique form, without ornament or crest, sparkled in the light. These cavaliers wore blue coats with yellow collar, pantaloons of white buckskin, and stout boots, reaching above the knee. Finally, for you, my friend, who are fond of military details, I will add, that at the top of the steps, on each side of the door, two grenadiers of the regiment of infantry of the grand-ducal guard were on duty. They resembled, I was told, in appearance, with the single exception of the colour of the dress and its linings, the grenadiers of Napoleon.

After having crossed the vestibule, where, with their halberds in their hands, stood the Swiss liveried servants of the prince, I ascended an imposing staircase of white marble, which led to a portico, ornamented with columns of jasper, surmounted by a cupola, painted and gilded. There were ranged two long files of foot-servants. I afterward entered into the guard-room, at the door of which were standing a chamberlain and an aid-de-camp on service, whose duty it was to lead up to his royal highness such persons as were entitled to be presented to him. My relationship, though distant, gave me a right to this honour. An aid-de-camp preceded me into a long gallery filled with men in court-dresses or uniforms, and ladies in full costume.

While I was slowly passing through this brilliant crowd, I heard words which heightened

still more my emotion. On all sides people were admiring the angelic beauty of the Princess Amelia, the charming face of the Marchioness d'Harville, and the truly imperial air of the Archduchess Sophia, who had recently arrived from Munich, with the Archduke Stanislaus, and was soon to go to Warsaw. But while all rendered homage to the lofty dignity of the archduchess and to the distinguished grace of the Marchioness d'Harville, it was acknowledged, that nothing was more ideal than the enchanting form of the Princess Amelia.

As I approached the spot where the grand-duke and his daughter were standing, I felt my heart beating violently. At the moment when I reached the door of this saloon (I forgot to tell you that there was a ball and court concert), the illustrious Liszt had just seated himself at the piano, and the deepest silence succeeded to the slight murmur of conversation. While awaiting the end of the piece, which the artist played with his accustomed superiority, I remained standing at the door.

Then, my dear Maximilian, for the first time I saw the Princess Amelia. Allow me to paint to you this scene, for I feel an inexpressible pleasure in gathering up all these recollections.

Imagine, my friend, a vast saloon, furnished with royal splendour, dazzling with light, and hung with crimson draperies, about which ran a border of foliage embroidered in gold. In the first row, in large gilded chairs, were seated the Archduchess Sophia (to whom the prince was doing the honours of the palace), on her left the Marchioness d'Harville, and on her right the Princess Amelia. Standing behind them was the grand-duke, wearing the uniform of colonel of his guards. He seemed to have renewed his youth by his happiness, and did not look more than thirty years old. The military dress set off finely the elegance of his height, and the beauty of his face. Near him stood the Archduke Stanislaus, in the costume of a field-marshal. Then came the Princess Amelia's ladies of honour, the wives of the grand dignitaries of the court, and, finally, the latter themselves.

Need I tell you that the Princess Amelia, by her rank less than by her grace and beauty, reigned supreme in this dazzling assemblage? Do not condemn me, my friend, without reading this description. Though it fall a thousand times below the reality, you may comprehend my adoration; you will understand that as soon as I saw her, I loved her, and that the suddenness of this passion can be equalled only by its violence, and the intensity of its duration.

The Princess Amelia, dressed in a simple robe of white watered silk, wore, like the Archduchess Sophia, the grand cordon of the imperial order of Saint Nepomucene, which had been recently sent her by the empress. A bandeau of pearls, surrounding her noble and open forehead, harmonized most exquisitely with the two large braids of magnificent ashy blond hair which bordered her cheeks, which were lightly tinged with red; her fair arms, still whiter than the waves of lace from which they escaped, were half hidden by her gloves, which did not come up to her dimpled elbow: nothing could be more graceful than her bearing, nothing

prettier than her little foot, with its white satin shoe. At the moment when I saw her, her large eyes, of the purest azure, were thoughtful. I do not know whether at this moment she felt the influence of some serious idea, or whether she was deeply impressed by the grave harmony of the piece Liszt was playing, but her half-smile seemed to me to have a sweet and inexpressible melancholy; her head was slightly bent over on her bosom, and she was playing mechanically with a great bouquet of white violets and roses which she held in her hand.

I could never express to you my feelings at that moment: all that my aunt had said to me of the ineffable goodness of the Princess Amelia came back to my mind. You may smile, my friend, but in spite of myself I felt my eyes moistening as I gazed on this thoughtful, almost sad young girl, so admirably beautiful, surrounded with honours, with such respect, and so idolized by such a father as the grand-duke.

Maximilian, I have often said it to you, I believe men incapable of tasting certain kinds of happiness, which are, so to speak, too complete, too immense for his circumscribed faculties; I think, too, that certain beings are too divinely endowed not to feel sometimes that they are alone here below, and that they feel at times vague regrets for their exquisite deficiency, which exposes them to so many deceptions, to so many chills which are unknown to less tender natures. It seemed to me that at that time the Princess Amelia felt the reaction of such a thought.

Suddenly, by some strange chance (there is a fatality about everything here), she mechanically turned her eyes towards the place where I was standing.

You know how scrupulously etiquette the hierarchy of rank is observed with us. Thanks to my title and to the ties of relationship which attach me to the grand-duke, the persons in the midst of whom I had at first placed myself had receded gradually, so that I remained almost alone and decidedly in the first row, in the embrasure of the gallery door.

It must undoubtedly have been this circumstance which caused the princess, as she started from her reverie, to perceive and take notice of me, for she made a slight movement of surprise, and blushed.

She had seen my portrait at the abbey, in my aunt's apartments, and she recognised me—nothing was more simple. The princess had scarcely looked at me for a second, but that look made me feel the most violent, the most profound emotion; I felt my cheeks on fire; I cast down my eyes, and remained some minutes without daring to raise them again towards the princess. When I ventured to lift them, she was talking in a low tone with the Archduchess Sophia, who appeared to listen with the most affectionate interest.

Liszt having put an interval of some moments between the two pieces he was to play, the grand-duke took advantage of that moment to express to him his admiration in the most gracious manner. The prince, as he returned to his place, perceived me, made a sign of the head to me with the greatest kindness, and said some words to the archduchess in pointing me out to her. The latter, after having looked at me for

a moment, turned towards the grand-duke, who could not prevent smiling as he replied to her and spoke to his daughter. The Princess Amelia seemed to me embarrassed, for she again blushed.

I was in torments; unfortunately, etiquette did not permit me to quit the spot where I was until the concert was over, which was again beginning. Two or three times I stole a glance at the Princess Amelia; she seemed pensive and thoughtful: my heart was oppressed; I suffered a slight feeling of uneasiness, as if I had been the cause of the pain she felt. Undoubtedly the grand-duke had been asking her, jestingly, if she found any resemblance to the portrait of her cousin of the olden times; and in her ingenuousness, she perhaps reproached herself for not having told her father that she had before recognised me.

When the concert was over, I followed the aid-de-camp. He led me towards the grand-duke, who advanced a few steps to meet me, took me cordially by the arm, and, approaching the Archduchess Sophia, said to her,

"I beg of your royal highness the permission to present to you my cousin, Prince Henry of Herkausen-Oldenzaal."

"I have already met the prince at Vienna, and I am happy to see him again here," replied the archduchess, before whom I made a profound bow.

"My dear Amelia," continued the prince, addressing himself to his daughter, "I present to you Prince Henry, your cousin; he is son of Prince Paul, one of my most venerable friends, whom I much regret not to see to-day at Gerolstein."

"Be so kind, sir, as to inform Prince Paul that I share deeply in my father's regrets, for I shall be always happy to become acquainted with his friends," replied my cousin, with a simplicity full of grace.

I had not before heard the sound of Princess Amelia's voice: imagine, my friend, the sweetest, the most delicious, the most harmonious tones; in fine, one of those accents which cause the most delicate cords of the soul to vibrate.

"I hope, my dear Henry, that you will remain some time with your aunt, to whom I am greatly attached. I respect her as a mother, as you know," said the grand-duke, kindly, to me. "Come often to see us, familiarly, in the morning, at three o'clock. If we are going out, you can join us in our walk; you know I have always loved you, because you have one of the most noble hearts."

"I do not know how to express to your royal highness my gratitude for the kind reception you condescend to bestow on me."

"To prove to me your gratitude, then," said the prince, smiling, "ask your cousin for the second contra dance; the first belongs of right to the archduke."

"Will your highness grant me this favour?" said I to the Princess Amelia, bowing before her.

"Call each other simply cousins, after the good old German custom," said the grand-duke, gayly; "ceremony is not proper among relatives."

"Will my cousin do me the honour to dance this contra dance with me?"

"Yes, cousin," replied the Princess Amelia.

CHAPTER III.

Prince Henry d'Herkenstein-Oldenzaal, to Count Maximilian Kaminets.

Oldenzaal, Aug. 25th, 1843.

I can hardly tell you, my friends, how pleased, and, at the same time, pained, I was at the fatherly cordiality of the grand-duke; the confidence he testified towards me, the affectionate kindness with which he induced his daughter and myself to substitute for the formula of etiquette these family terms of a most tender intimacy, all penetrated me with gratitude; I reproached myself so much the more bitterly for the fatal attraction of a love which ought not, or could not be agreeable to the prince.

I had promised myself, it is true (and I have not failed in this resolution), never to utter a word which might lead my cousin to suspect the love that I was nourishing; but I feared that my emotion, my glances, might betray me. In spite of myself, however, this sentiment, silent and concealed as it must be, seemed guilty to me.

I had time to make these reflections while the Princess Amelia was dancing the first contra dance with the Archduke Stanislaus. Here, as everywhere, dancing is no more than a kind of march which follows the measure of the orchestra; nothing could show to more advantage the serious grace of my cousin's carriage.

With a happiness mingled with anxiety, I awaited the moment for that conversation that the liberty of the ball would allow me to hold with her. I was sufficiently master of myself to conceal my embarrassment, as I went to seek her with the Marchioness d'Harville.

Thinking of the circumstances of the portrait, I expected to see the Princess Amelia share my embarrassment. I was not mistaken; I recall, almost word for word, our first conversation: let me relate it you, my friend:

"Will your highness permit me," said I to her, "to say *my cousin*, as the grand-duke has authorized me?"

"Certainly, my cousin," she kindly answered me: "I am always happy to obey my father."

"And I am still more proud of this familiarity, my cousin; I have learned through my aunt to know you, that is to say, to appreciate you."

"My father has also spoken to me of you, cousin, and what will perhaps astonish you," added she, timidly, "I know you already, if I may say so, by sight. The lady superior of St. Hermangilde, for whom I have the most affectionate respect, one day showed to us, to my father and myself, a picture."

"Where I was represented as a page of the sixteenth century?"

"Yes, cousin, and my father even used the little deceit of telling me that this portrait was of one of our relations of the olden time, adding such kind words towards this cousin of former days, that our family must be happy to number him among our relations of the present day."

"Alas! my cousin, I fear I resemble no more the moral portrait that the grand-duke designed to make of me, than I do the page of the sixteenth century."

"You deceive yourself, cousin," said the princess to me, gayly; "for at the end of the

conceal, casting my eyes, by chance, towards the side gallery, I recognised you directly, in spite of the difference of costume."

Then, wishing, undoubtedly, to change a subject of conversation that embarrassed her, she said to me,

"What a wonderful talent M. Liszt possesses! do you not think so?"

"Wonderful. With what pleasure you listened to him!"

"Because, indeed, it seems to me there is a double charm in music without words; not only is it played with excellent execution, but we can in a moment apply our own thoughts to the melodies that we hear, and which become, so to speak, their accompaniment. I know not if you understand me, cousin?"

"Perfectly. Our thoughts are, then, the words that we adapt mentally to the air that we hear."

"Just so, just so: you understand me," said she to me, with an expression of pleased satisfaction; "I fear I should explain but ill what I felt just now, while listening to that melody, so plaintive and so touching."

"God grant, my cousin," said I to her, smiling, "that you may have no words to put to an air so sad?"

Either because my question was indiscreet, and she wished to avoid answering me, or because she had not understood it, the Princess Amelia immediately said to me, pointing out the grand-duke, who, giving his arm to the Archduchess Sophia, was then traversing the dancing gallery,

"Cousin, look at my father: how handsome he is! How noble and fine his air! how eagerly all glances follow him! It seems to me he is more beloved even than he is revered."

"Ah!" I exclaimed, "it is not only here in the midst of this court that he is cherished! If the blessings of the people should be echoed to posterity, the name of Rodolphe of Gerolstein would be, with justice, immortal!"

In speaking thus, my enthusiasm was sincere; for you know, my friend, that the dominions of the prince are, with good reason, called *the Paradise of Germany*.

It is impossible to paint to you the grateful glance my cousin threw upon me, on hearing me speak in this manner.

"To appreciate my father thus," said she to me, with emotion, "is to be worthy of the attachment he bears to you."

"And can no one but myself love and admire him! Besides, those rare qualities that make great princes, has he not the genius of kindness that makes princes adored?"

"You know not how truly you speak," exclaimed the princess, still more moved.

"Ah, I know—I know it, and all those whom he governs know it as I do. They love him so much that they mourn in his sorrows, as they rejoice in his happiness; the eagerness of all to come and offer their homage to the Marchioness d'Harville, is bestowed on the choice of his royal highness, as well as the true worth of the future grand-duchess."

"The Marchioness d'Harville is more worthy than any one of the attachment of my father; this is the highest praise of her I can give you."

"And you can, doubtless, appreciate her justly. Have you not known her in France, my cousin?"

"Hardly had I uttered these last words, when some sudden thought, I know not what, came into the Princess Amelia's mind: he cast down her eyes, and, for a second, her features wore an expression of sadness, that made me silent with surprise.

We were then at the end of the contradance; the last figure separated me a moment from my cousin; when I led her back to the Marchioness d'Harville, it seemed to me her features were still slightly moved.

I believed, and I believe still, that my allusion to the abode of the princess, in France, having recalled to her the death of her mother, created in her the painful impression, of which I have just spoken to you.

During this evening, I remarked a circumstance which will, perhaps, appear to you puerile, but which has been to me a new proof of the fascination this young girl inspires in all. Her bandeau of pearls being a little deranged, the Archduchess Sophia, who was leaning upon her arm, was kind enough to be willing herself to replace the bijou upon her brow. Now, to one who knows the proverbial hauteur of the archduchess, such an act of graciousness from her seems scarcely conceivable. Besides, the Princess Amelia, whom I was observing attentively at the moment, appeared at the same time so confused, so grateful, I might almost say, so embarrassed at this graceful attention, that I thought I saw a tear sparkle in her eyes.

Such, my friend, was my first evening at Gérolstein. If I have related it to you with some detail, it is that almost all these circumstances have since had their results for me.

I will now abridge: I will only speak to you of some of the principal circumstances relating to my frequent interviews with my cousin and her father.

The day after this fête, I was among the very small number of persons invited to the celebration of the marriage of the grand-duke and the Marchioness d'Harville. I never saw the countenance of the Princess Amelia more radiant and more serene than during this ceremony. She gazed upon her father and the marchioness with a sort of religious ecstasy, that gave a new charm to her features; it might have been said that they reflected the ineffable happiness of the prince and the Marchioness d'Harville.

That day my cousin was very gay, very affable. I gave her my arm in a walk that we took after dinner in the palace gardens, which were magnificently illuminated. She said to me, on speaking of her father's marriage,

"It seems to me that the happiness of those we cherish is yet more sweet to us than our own; for is there not always a shade of selfishness in the enjoyment of our own personal happiness?"

If I give you, from among a thousand, this reflection of my cousin's, my friend, it is that you may judge of the heart of this adorable creature, who possesses, like her father, the spirit of goodness.

Some days after the marriage of the grand-duke, I held quite a long conversation with him.

He asked me of the past, of my plans for the future; he gave me the wisest counsel, the most flattering encouragement; he even spoke to me of several of his plans for government, with a confidence that made me feel as proud as I was flattered; in short—shall I tell it to you? For one moment a most foolish idea crossed my mind; I fancied that the prince had imagined my love, and that in this conversation he wished to study me, feel my sentiments, and perhaps lead me to an avowal.

Unhappily, this mad hope did not last long; the prince brought the conversation to a close by telling me that the time for great wars had passed away; that I ought to profit by my name, my connexions, the education I had received, and the intimate friendship that had united my father and Prince M., prime minister to the emperor, and pass through the diplomatic, instead of the military career; adding, that all the questions which were decided formerly upon the battle-field, would henceforth be decided by Congresses; that soon the intricate and base tradition of ancient diplomacy would give place to an enlarged and humane system of politics concerning the true interests of the people, who from day to day gained more knowledge of their rights; that a high, loyal, and generous spirit might have, before many years, a noble and great part to play in political affairs, and might thus do much good; he proposed to me, in short, the assistance of his high patronage to facilitate me at the outset of the career in which he solicited me to embark.

You understand, my friend, that if the prince had had the least design upon me, he had not made me such overtures. I thanked him for his offers with warm gratitude, adding, that I felt all the worth of his counsel, and was determined to follow it.

I had at first used some reserve in my visits to the palace, but in consequence of the urgency of the grand-duke, I soon went there every day, about three o'clock. They lived there in all the simplicity of our German courts. It was the life of the great castles in England, rendered still more attractive by the cordial simplicity, the pleasing liberty of German manners. When the weather permitted, we took long rides with the grand-duke, the grand-duchess, my cousin, and the people of their household. When we remained in the palace we were occupied with music. I sang with the grand-duchess and my cousin, whose voice was of a tone of unequalled sweetness and purity—such that I could never hear it, without being moved even to the depths of my soul. At other times, we examined in detail the wonderful collections of pictures and works of art, or the admirable library of the prince, who, you know, is one of the most learned and best-informed men in Europe; frequently I returned to dine at the palace, and on opera days I accompanied the grand-ducal family to the theatre.

Every day passed like a dream: my cousin gradually came to treat me with a truly sisterly familiarity; she did not conceal from me the pleasure that she felt in seeing me; she confided to me all that interested her. Two or three times she begged me to accompany her when she went with the grand-duchess to visit the young orphans; often, also, she spoke to me of my fu-

ture plans with a maturity of reason, a serious and reflective interest, that astonished me, coming from a girl of her age; she was very fond, too, of inquiring of my infancy, and of my mother, alas! ever regretted. Every time that I wrote to my father she begged me to recall her to his remembrance; then, for she embroidered to admiration, she gave me one day for him a charming piece of tapestry, upon which she had worked for a long time. What more shall I tell you, my friend! a brother and sister, meeting again after a long separation, would not have enjoyed a sweeter intimacy. Let me add, that when, by some unusual chance, we were left alone, the entrance of a third could never have changed the subject, or even the accent of our conversation.

You will be, perhaps, astonished, my friend, at this brotherly feeling between two young people, especially as you recall what I have acknowledged to you; but the more confidence and familiarity my cousin showed me, the more I watched over, the more I constrained myself, for fear of putting an end to the adorable familiarity. And then, what increased still more my reserve, the princess showed, in her intercourse with me, so much frankness, so much noble confidence, and especially so little coquetry, that I am almost certain that she has always been ignorant of my violent passion, though there remains a slight doubt on this subject, arising from a circumstance that I will relate you immediately.

If this brotherly intercourse could always have lasted, perhaps this happiness might have been sufficient for me; but even while I was enjoying this with delight, I reflected that my service or the new career in which the prince was inducing me to engage would soon call me to Vienna or abroad; I reflected, in short, that presently, perhaps, the grand-duke would think of marrying his daughter in a manner worthy her.

These thoughts became the more painful to me as the moment of my departure approached. My cousin soon observed the change that was at work in me. The evening before the day I left her, she told me that for a long time she had found me gloomy and abstracted. I endeavoured to elude her questions; I attributed my sadness to a vague ennui.

"I cannot believe you," said she to me: "my father treats you almost as a son; everybody loves you; to be unhappy would be ingratitude."

"Ah, well!" said I to her, without being able to conquer my emotion, "it is not ennui: it is grief—yes, a penetrating grief that I feel."

"And why? What has happened to you?" she asked me, with interest.

"Just now, my cousin, you told me that your father treated me as a son; that here everybody loved me. Ah! well, before long I must renounce these precious attachments: I must, in short, leave Gérolstein, and I confess to you, this thought fills me with despair."

"And the remembrance of those that are dear to us—is this, then, nothing, my cousin?"

"Ah, yes—but years, but events bring so many unforeseen changes!"

"There are at least attachments which are not changed; such as my father has always shown you. What I feel for you is of this kind,

you know well; we are brother and sister—never to forget one another," added she, raising towards me her large blue eyes, filled with tears.

This glance overwhelmed me; I was on the point of betraying myself; fortunately, I restrained myself.

"It is true, that feeling lasts," said I to her, in an embarrassed manner; "but circumstances alter. For instance, my cousin, when in a few years I shall return, do you think that then this intimacy, whose charm I value so fully, may yet continue?"

"Why should it not continue?"

"Because you will then be, undoubtedly, married, my cousin—you will have other duties—and you will have forgotten your poor brother."

* * * * *

I swear to you, my friend, I said no more to her. I know not yet if she saw in these words an avowal which was displeasing to her, or whether she, like myself, was sadly struck by the inevitable changes that the future must necessarily make in our intercourse; but, instead of answering me, she remained a moment silent, overwhelmed; then rising suddenly, her countenance pale and disordered, she went out, after examining some embroidery by the young Countess d'Oppenheim, one of her ladies of honour, who was working in the embrasure of one of the windows of the saloon where our conversation took place.

The evening of this day I received a new letter from my father, which recalled me suddenly here. The next morning I went to take leave of the grand-duke; he told me that my cousin was a little unwell, that I might intrust to him my last words to her; he pressed me to his heart, like a father, regretting, he added, my sudden departure, and especially that this departure was occasioned by the anxiety that the health of my father gave me; then recalling to me, with the greatest kindness, his counsel on the subject of the new career which he begged me to embrace immediately, he added, that on my return from my embassies, or on my leaves of absence, he should see me again at Gérolstein with warm pleasure.

Happily, on my arrival here I found the state of my father a little improved; he still keeps his bed, and is constantly feeble, but his health no longer gives me any serious anxiety. Unfortunately, he has already noticed my depression, my gloomy taciturnity, several times; but he has supplicated me in vain to confide to him the cause of my melancholy grief. I should not dare it, notwithstanding his blind tenderness for me; you know his severity as regards everything which appears to him wanting in frankness and loyalty. Yesterday I watched with him; when alone by his side, believing him asleep, I could not restrain my tears, which flowed in silence as I thought of my happy days at Gérolstein. He saw me weep, for he soon awaked while I was absorbed in my grief: he questioned me with the most touching kindness; I attributed my sadness to the anxiety that his health had caused me, but he was not deceived by this evasion.

Now that you know all, my good Maximilian, say, is not my fate forlorn enough? What shall I do—what resolve?

* * * * *

"Ah, my friend, I cannot tell you my anguish. What is to happen, my God! All is utterly lost! I am the most wretched of men if my father does not renounce his project."

"I will tell you what has just happened; just now I had finished this letter, when, to my great astonishment, my father, whom I believed in bed, entered my cabinet, where I was writing to you; he saw upon my desk my four first great pages all filled; I was at the end of this last—"

"To whom do you write to so at length!" he asked me, smiling.

"To Maximilian, father."

"Oh!" said he to me, with an expression of affectionate reproach, "I know that he possesses your confidence entirely; he is very happy—*he*."

"He pronounced these last words so sadly, in such a wounded tone, that, touched by his accent, I replied to him, giving him my letter, almost without reflection,

"Read, father."

"My friend, he has read all. Do you know what he said to me, after remaining for some time thoughtful!"

"Henry, I am going to write to the grand-duke all that passed during your stay at G rolstein."

"My father, I conjure you, do not do it."

"Is what you relate to Maximilian perfectly true?"

"Yes, my father!"

"In this case, until now, your conduct has been upright. The prince will appreciate it. But in future you should not show yourself unworthy of his noble confidence; you would do so if, abusing his offer, you should return hereafter to G rolstein, with the intention, perhaps, of making yourself beloved by his daughter."

"My father, could you think—?"

"I think that you love with passion, and that passion is, sooner or later, an evil counsellor."

"How, my father? you will write to the prince that—"

"That you love your cousin desperately."

"In the name of Heaven, my father, I supplicate you, do nothing of this!"

"Do you love your cousin?"

"I love her to idolatry; but—"

My father interrupted me.

"If this is the case, I shall write to the grand-duke to demand of him for you the hand of his daughter."

"But, my father, such a claim is madness for me!"

"It is true; nevertheless, I ought frankly to make this demand of the prince, representing to him the reasons that lead me to this step. He has received you with the most true hospitality, he has shown you fatherly kindness; it would be unworthy me and you to deceive him. I know the greatness of his soul; he will feel that I am dealing as an honest man; if he refuses to give you his daughter, and this is almost unquestionable, he will know at least that in future, if you should return to G rolstein, you ought to be no more in the same intimacy with her. You have shown me, my child," added my father, kindly, "the letter that you have written to Maximilian. I am now in-

formed of everything; it is my duty to write to the grand-duke, and I am going to write this very moment."

"You know, my friend, that my father is the best of men, but he has an inflexible tenacity of will when the question is what regards his duty; judge of my anguish, my terror. Though the step he is going to take may be, after all, frank and honourable, it does not trouble me less. How will the grand-duke receive this mad offer! Will he not be displeased with it? and will not the Princess Amelia be as much wounded that I have allowed my father to take such a step without her consent?"

"Ah, my friend, pity me, I know not what to think. It seems as though I were looking upon an abyss, and that a dizziness were coming over me."

"I finish in haste this long letter; I shall write you soon. Yet once more pity me, for, in truth, I fear I shall become crazy if the fever that excites me lasts longer. Adieu, adieu! Yours from my heart, and ever

"HENRY D'H. O."

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We now conduct the reader to the palace of G rolstein, where Fleur de Marie had dwelt since her return from France.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRINCESS AMELIA.

THE apartment occupied by Fleur de Marie (we shall call her the Princess Amelia only *officially*), in the grand-ducal palace, had been furnished, by Rodolphe's care, with extreme taste and elegance. From the balcony of the young girls' oratory, could be seen, in the distance, the two towers of the Convent of St. Hermangilder, which, rising above immense masses of verdure, were themselves commanded by a high, wooded mountain, at the foot of which the abbey stood.

On a beautiful morning in summer, Fleur de Marie was allowing her glances to wander over this splendid landscape, which extended far away in the distance. Her hair was dressed, but she wore a toilet dress of thin material, white, with narrow blue stripes; a large handkerchief of plain cambric falling upon her shoulders, left visible the two ends and the knot of a little silk cravat, of the same blue as the girdle of her dress.

Seated in a large, high-backed elbow chair, made of carved ebony and cramoisie velvet, her elbow supported by one arm of this seat, her head a little bent down, she supported her cheek upon the back of her small white hand, delicately veined with azure.

The languishing attitude of Fleur de Marie, her paleness, the fixedness of her gaze, the bitterness of her half-smile, revealed a deep melancholy.

After some moments, a heavy, sad sigh relieved her breast. Then letting her hand which supported her cheek fall again, she bent her head farther upon her breast. You would have said that the wretched girl was bending beneath the weight of some heavy misfortune.

At this moment a woman of mature age,

with a grave and distinguished air, dressed in elegant simplicity, entered the oratory, almost timidly, and coughed slightly, to attract the attention of Fleur de Marie.

Arousing herself from her reverie, she raised her head quickly, and said, saluting her with a motion full of grace,

"What do you wish, my dear countess?"

"I come to inform your highness that my lord begs you to await him; for he will meet you here in a few minutes," replied Princess Amelia's maid of honour, with respectful formality.

"I was wondering that I had not yet saluted my father to-day; I wait his visit each morning with so much impatience! But I hope that I do not owe to any illness of Mademoiselle Harneim the pleasure of seeing you, my dear countess, at the palace two days in succession?"

"Let your highness feel no uneasiness on that point, Mademoiselle Harneim has begged me to take her place to-day; to-morrow she will have the honour of resuming her service of your highness, who will perhaps excuse the change."

"Certainly, for I shall lose nothing by it; after having had the pleasure of seeing you two days in succession, my dear countess, I shall have for two other days Mademoiselle Harneim with me."

"Your highness honours us," replied the lady of honour, bending again; "this extreme kindness encourages me to ask a favour!"

"Speak, speak; you know my eagerness to be of assistance to you."

"It is true that for a long time your highness has accustomed me to your goodness; but this regards a subject so painful, that I should not have the courage to enter upon it, if it did not concern a very deserving object; for this reason I dare to depend upon the extreme indulgence of your highness."

"You have no need of my indulgence, my dear countess; I am always very grateful for every occasion that is given me for doing a little good."

"This concerns a poor creature who, unfortunately, had quitted Gérolstein before your highness had established that institution, which is so charitable, and so useful for young orphan or forsaken girls, whom nothing protects from evil passions?"

"And what has happened to her? what do you beg for her?"

"Her father, a very adventurous man, went to seek his fortune in America, leaving his wife and daughter to a precarious mode of existence. The mother died; the daughter, hardly sixteen years old when left to herself, quitted the country to follow to Vienna a seducer, who soon forsok her. Then, as always happens, the first step in the path of vice led this wretched girl to an abyss of infamy; in a short time she became, like so many other miserable creatures, the opprobrium of her sex."

Fleur de Marie cast down her eyes, blushed, and could not conceal a slight shudder, which did not escape the maid of honour. Fearing to have wounded the chaste susceptibility of the princess by conversing with her upon such a creature, she continued, with embarrassment:

"I ask a thousand pardons of your royal

highness; I have undoubtedly offended you drawing your attention to so polluted a being but the miserable one shows so sincere a repentance, that I thought I could solicit for her a little pity."

"And you were right. Go on, I pray you," said Fleur de Marie, conquering her sad emotion; "indeed, all errors are worthy of pity, when repentance follows them."

"And that is the case here, as I have remarked to your highness. After two years of this abominable life, grace touched this abandoned one. A prey to a late remorse, she has returned here. Chance so favoured her, that, on her arrival here, she was lodged at a house belonging to a worthy widow, whose gentleness and piety are well known. Encouraged by the pious goodness of the widow, the poor creature has confessed to her her faults, adding that she felt a just horror for her past life, and that she would purchase, at the price of the most severe penance, the happiness of entering a religious house, where she might expiate her errors and deserve their redemption. The worthy widow to whom she has intrusted this confidence, knowing that I had the honour to serve your highness, has written to me to recommend to me this unfortunate one, who, by means of the all-powerful agency of your highness with the Princess Juliana, lady superior of the abbey, might hope to enter the Convent of St. Hermangilda as lay sister; she asks as a favour to be employed in the most painful labours, that her penance may be more meritorious. I have several times desired to converse with this woman before allowing myself to implore for her the pity of your highness, and I am firmly convinced that her repentance will be lasting. It is neither want nor age that has brought her to the true good; she is scarcely eighteen years old; she is yet very beautiful, and possesses a small sum of money, that she wishes to devote to a charitable object if she obtains the favour that she solicits."

"I will take charge of your protégée," said Fleur de Marie, restraining with difficulty her emotion, so much resemblance did her past life offer to that of the unfortunate one in whose favour she was solicited; she added, "the repentance of this miserable one is too praiseworthy to be left without encouragement."

"I know not how to express my gratitude to your highness. I hardly dared hope your highness would deign to be so charitably interested in such a creature."

"She has been guilty—she repents," said Fleur de Marie, with an accent of commiseration and inexpressible sadness; "it is right to nourish pity for her. The more sincere her remorse, the more painful must it be, my dear countess."

"I hear my lord, I believe," said the maid of honour, suddenly, without remarking the deep and increasing emotion of Fleur de Marie.

In fact, Rodolphe was entering a saloon which opened into the oratory, holding in his hand an enormous bunch of roses.

At the sight of the prince, the countess discreetly retired. Hardly had she disappeared, when Fleur de Marie threw herself upon her father's neck, resting her forehead upon his

boulder, and remained thus some seconds without speaking.

"Good-morning, good-morning, my dear child," said Rodolphe, pressing his daughter to his breast with feeling, without yet observing her sadness. "See this thicket of roses; what a fine harvest I have made for you this morning; it was this which prevented me from coming sooner; I hope that I have never brought you a more magnificent bouquet. Take it."

And the prince, still holding his bouquet in his hand, moved backward gently, to disengage his daughter from his arms and look at her; but seeing her burst into tears, he threw the bouquet upon a table, took Fleur de Marie's hands in his, and exclaimed,

"You weep; my God! what is the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, my dear father," said Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, and endeavouring to smile upon Rodolphe.

"Tell me, I beg you, what is the matter? What can have made you sad?"

"I assure you, father, it is nothing to distress you. The countess has just solicited my interest for a poor woman, so interesting, so unhappy; that in spite of myself I am moved by her recital."

"Truly? Is it only this?"

"It is only this," answered Fleur de Marie, taking from a table the flowers that Rodolphe had thrown there; "but how you spoil me!" added she, "what a magnificent bouquet, and when I think that each day, you bring me such, gathered by yourself."

"My child," said Rodolphe, gazing upon his daughter with anxiety, "you conceal something from me; your smile is sad—constrained. Tell me, I beg you, what distresses you; do not occupy yourself with this bouquet."

"Ah, you know this bouquet is my joy every morning; and then I love roses so much—I have always loved them so much. You remember," added she, with an affecting smile, "you remember my poor little rose-bush. I have always kept its remains."

At this painful allusion to the past, Rodolphe exclaimed,

"Unhappy child! Are my suspicions founded? In the midst of the splendour that surrounds you, would you yet sometimes think of that horrible time? Alas! I had thought to have made you forget it by tenderness."

"Pardon, pardon, father! these words escape me. I make you sad."

"I am myself sad, poor angel," said Rodolphe, sorrowfully, "because these returns to the past must be fearful to you—because they would poison your life if you were weak enough to abandon yourself to them."

"Father, this was by chance. Since our arrival here, this is the first time—"

"This is the first time you have spoken of it—yes; but, perhaps, this is not the first time that these thoughts have troubled you. I have perceived your moments of melancholy, and sometimes I have accused the past, as causing your sadness. But, as I was uncertain, I dared not even attempt to combat the sad influence of these remembrances—to show you the uselessness, the injustice of them—for, if your grief had arisen from another cause, if the past had been to you what it ought to be, a vain, bad

dream, I should risk awakening in you painful ideas, that I should wish to destroy."

"How good you are! how do these fears show me your ineffable tenderness!"

"What do you mean? My position was so difficult, so delicate. On another occasion I said nothing, but I was ever thinking of what concerned you. By contracting this marriage, which crowned all my desires, I also hoped to give another guarantee to your repose. I knew too well the excessive delicacy of your heart to hope that you could ever—ever cease to think of the past; but I said to myself, that if, by chance, your thoughts ever lingered there, you ought, feeling yourself cherished as a daughter by the noble woman who knew and loved you in the depth of your misfortunes—you ought, I say, to regard the past as sufficiently expiated for by your heavy miseries, and be indulgent, or rather just, towards yourself; for, indeed, my wife is entitled by her high qualities to the respect of all—is it not so? Ah, well, since you are to her a daughter, a cherished sister, ought you not to be encouraged? Is not her tender attachment an entire redemption? Does it not tell you that she knows, as I do, that you have been a victim—that you are not guilty—that others can, indeed, reproach you only with *misfortune*, that has overwhelmed you from your birth! Had you even committed great faults, would they not be a thousand times expiated, redeemed, by all the good you have done, by all that is excellent and adorable that has been developed in you?"

"My father—"

"Ah, let me—let me tell you all my thoughts, since an accident, for which indeed we ought to be grateful, has caused this conversation. For a long time I have desired, and at the same time dreaded it. God will that it may have a salutary result! It was mine to make you forget so many dreadful sorrows, I have a mission to fulfil towards you so august, so sacred, that I should have had the courage to sacrifice for your repose my love for Madame d'Harville—my friendship for Murphy, if I had thought their presence would have recalled to you too bitterly the past."

"Oh, my good father, could you think so! Their presence, the presence of those who know *what I was*, and who yet love me tenderly, does it not, on the contrary, personify forgetfulness and pardon? Indeed, my father, would not my whole life have been made desolate, had you renounced for me your marriage with Madame d'Harville?"

"Ah! I should not have been the only one to desire this sacrifice, if it would secure your happiness. You know not what self-denial Clémence had already voluntarily imposed upon herself, for she also comprehends all the extent of my duty to you."

"Your duty to me, my God! And what have I done to merit so much!"

"What have you done, poor dear angel! Until the moment you were restored to me, your life was only bitterness, misery, desolation; and for your past sufferings I reproach myself as if I had caused them. And when I see you smiling, pleased, I believe myself pardoned; my only aim, my only wish is to render you as entirely happy, as you have been

unfortunate; to raise you as much as you have been lowered, for it seems to me the last traces of the past are effaced when the most eminent, the most honourable persons pay you the respect which is due to you."

"Respect to me? no, no, my father; but to my rank, or, rather, to that you have given me."

"Ah! it is not your rank that is loved, that is revered—it is you, understand; indeed, my dear child, it is yourself, it is yourself alone. There is homage imposed by rank, but it is another imposed by powers of attraction and fascination! You know not how to distinguish between these, because you know not yourself; because you know not that, by a wonderful intelligence and tact, which renders me as proud as idolatrous of you, you carry into all ceremonious intercourse, so new to you, a union of dignity, modesty, and grace, which is irresistible to the most stately characters."

"You love me so much, father, and all love you so much, that every one is sure of pleasing you by showing me deference."

"Ah, the wicked child!" exclaimed Rodolphe, interrupting his daughter, and embracing her tenderly; "what a wicked child, who will not grant a single satisfaction to my fatherly pride!"

"Is not this pride sufficiently satisfied by attributing to you the good feeling that is shown me, my good father?"

"No, indeed, mademoiselle," said the prince, smiling, to his daughter, to chase away the sadness with which he still saw her affected, "no, mademoiselle, it is not the same thing; for it is not allowable for me to be proud of myself, and I can and ought to be proud of you—yes, proud. And again, you know not how divinely you are endowed; for fifteen months your education has become so marvellously complete, that the most difficult mother would be satisfied with you, and this education has increased still more the almost irresistible influence that you spread around you without being yourself aware of it."

"My father, your praises confuse me."

"I speak the truth, nothing but the truth. Do you wish for instances? Let us speak boldly of the past; it is an enemy that I wish to fight hand to hand; we must look it in the face. Do you not, then, remember La Louve, that courageous woman who saved you? Recall that prison scene which you have related me; a crowd of prisoners, more hardened indeed than wicked, were bent upon tormenting one of their companions, feeble, infirm, and yet their drudge; you appear, you speak, and behold, immediately these furies, blushing for their base cruelty towards their victim, show themselves as charitable as they were wicked. Is this, then, nothing? Again, is it—yes or no—owing to you that La Louve, that ungovernable woman, has felt repentance, and desired an honest and laborious life? Ah, believe me, my dear child, that which conquered La Louve and her turbulent companions, merely by the ascendancy of goodness, combined with a rare elevation of mind; this, although in other circumstances and in an utterly different sphere, must, by the same charm (do not smile at such a parallel, mademoiselle) fascinate the stately Archduchess Sophia and all the circle of my court; for the good and wicked, great and small, sub-

mit almost always to the influence of high, nobler spirits. I do not wish to say that you were *born princess* in the aristocratic sense of the word; that would be a poor flattery to make you my child; but you are of that small number of privileged beings who are born both to speak to a queen so as to charm her, and to earn her love, and also to speak to a poor, debased, and abandoned creature, so as to make her better, to console her, and thus gain her adoration."

"But, my dear father, I beg—"

"Ah, it is so much the worse for you, mademoiselle, that it is so long since my heart has poured forth. Think, then, how, with my fear of awakening in you the remembrances of the past which I wish to annihilate, and that I will forever annihilate in your mind, I dared not converse to you of these comparisons, these parallels, which render you so admirable in my eyes. How many times have Clémence and I been enraptured with you! How many times, moved so that the tears rose in her eyes, has she said to me, 'Is it not wonderful that this child should be what she is, after misfortune has so pursued her! or, rather, would Clémence continue, 'is it not wonderful that, far from impairing that noble and rare nature, misfortune has, on the contrary, given a higher range to what there was excellent in her.'"

At this moment the door opened, and Clémence, grand-duchess of Gérolstein, entered, holding a letter in her hand.

"Here, my friend," said she to Rodolphe, "is a letter from France. I wished to bring it to you, that I might say good-morning to my indolent child, whom I have not seen this morning," added Clémence, embracing Fleur de Marie tenderly.

"This letter comes just at the right moment," said Rodolphe, gayly, after having read it through. "We were talking just now of the past; of that monster that we must incessantly combat, my dear Clémence, for it threatens the repose and the happiness of our dear child."

"Is this true, my friend! those attacks of melancholy which we have observed—"

"Have no other cause than wicked remembrances; but, fortunately, we now know our enemy, and we will triumph over it."

"But from whom, then, is this letter, my friend?" asked Clémence.

"From the pretty Rigolette, the wife of Germain."

"Rigolette!" exclaimed Fleur de Marie; "what happiness to hear from her!"

"My friend," said Clémence, aside to Rodolphe, at the same time glancing at Fleur de Marie, "do you not fear that this letter may recall to her painful recollections?"

"These are those very remembrances I wish to put an end to, my dear Clémence; we must approach them boldly, and I am sure that I shall find in Rigolette's letter excellent arms against them, for this excellent little creature adored our child, and appreciated her as she should be."

And Rodolphe read aloud the following letter:

"Bouqueval Farm, Aug. 15th, 1841.

"MY LORD,

Make the liberty of writing to you again to make you a sharer of a great happiness which has befallen us, and to ask of you a new favour—of you, to whom we already owe so many, or,

rather, to whom we owe the perfect paradise in which we live, I, my Germain, and his good mother

"This is the cause, my lord; for ten days I have been mad with joy, for it is ten days since I have possessed a love of a little girl; I fancy that she is the very picture of Germain; he, that she is of me; our dear mamma Georges says that she resembles both; the fact is, she has charming blue eyes like Germain, and black hair, curly, like mine. Just now, contrary to his custom, my husband is unjust; he wishes to have our little one always upon his knees, while I, it is my right, is it not, my lord?"

"Fine, worthy young persons! they ought to be happy," said Rodolphe. "If ever couple were well matched, it is this."

"And Rigolette deserves her happiness," said Fleur de Marie.

"I have always blessed the good fortune that caused me to meet them," said Rodolphe, and he continued:

"But indeed, my lord, pardon my burdening you with these little family quarrels that end always with a kiss. Certainly your ears must tingle well, my lord, for there does not pass a day that we do not say, looking at each other, we two, Germain and I, 'How happy we are, O God, how happy we are!' and naturally your name follows directly after these words. Excuse the scrawl there is just here, my lord, and the blot; I had written without thinking *Monsieur Rodolphe*, as I used to say, and I have scratched it out. I hope, by-the-way, that you will find my writing has improved much, as well as my orthography, for Germain always shows me how, and I no longer make great blots stretching all across, as when you made my pens."

"I must confess," said Rodolphe, laughing, "that my protégée is under a slight illusion, and I am sure that Germain is occupied rather with kissing the hand of his pupil than directing it."

"Come, come, my friend, you are right," said Clémence, looking at the letter, "the writing is a little large, but very legible."

"In truth, there is some progress," said Rodolphe; "formerly it would have taken eight pages to contain what she writes now in two."

And he continued:

"It is, however, true that you have made pens for me, my lord; when we think of it, Germain and I, we are quite ashamed, in recalling how far from proud you were. Ah, my God! here again do I find myself speaking to you of something besides what we wish to ask you, my lord; for my husband unites with me, and it is very important; we have formed a plan. You shall see."

"We supplicate you, then, my lord, to have the goodness to choose and give us a name for our dear girl; it is agreed upon with the godfather and godmother, and this godfather and godmother, do you know who they are, my lord! Two persons whom you and her ladyship the Marchioness D'Harville have raised from misery to render happy, happy as we are. In a word, they are Morel, the jeweller, and Jeanne Duport, the sister of a poor prisoner named *Pique Vinagre*, a worthy woman whom I saw in prison when I went to visit my poor Germain there, and whom, afterward, her lady-

ship, the marchioness, brought out from the hospital.

"Now, my lord, you must know why we have chosen M. Morel for godfather, and Jeanne Duport for godmother. We said one to another, we, Germain and I, this will be a way of thanking M. Rodolphe again for his kindness, by taking for godfather and godmother of our little girl worthy people who owe everything to him and to the marchioness, without taking into consideration that Morel the jeweller and Jeanne Duport are the cream of honest people. They are of our class, and besides, as Germain and I say, they are *our kindred in happiness*, for they are, like us, of the family of your protégés, my lord."

"Ah, my father, has not this idea a charming delicacy," said Fleur de Marie, with emotion, "to take as godfather and godmother of their child those who owe everything to you and my second mother!"

"You are right, dear child," said Clémence; "I am most deeply touched by this token."

"And I am very glad that I have so well bestowed my benefits," said Rodolphe, continuing to read.

"Besides, with the aid of the money you have given him, Monsieur Rodolphe, Morel is now dealer in precious stones; he gains something to bring up his family upon, and the means of teaching his children some trade. The good and poor Louise will, I think, marry a worthy labourer, who loves and respects her, as he should, for she has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and the betrothed of Louise has heart enough to understand this."

"I was very certain," exclaimed Rodolphe, addressing his daughter, "of finding in this dear little Rigolette's letter, arms against our enemy! You hear, it is the expression of the plain common sense of this honest and upright soul. She says of Louise, '*She has been unfortunate, but not guilty, and her betrothed has heart enough to understand this.*'"

Fleur de Marie, more and more moved and saddened by the reading of this letter, trembled at the glance that her father fixed upon her, for a moment, as he pronounced the last words we have underlined.

The prince continued:

"I will tell you also, my lord, that Jeanne Duport, through the generosity of the marchioness, has been able to be separated from her husband, that wicked man who ate her out of everything and beat her; she has taken her eldest daughter with her, and she keeps a little lace shop, where she sells what she and her children make; their trade prospers. There is nowhere such happy people, and thanks to whom? thanks to you, my lord, to the marchioness, who both know how to give so much, and to give to so good purpose."

"By-the-way, Germain will write to you as usual, my lord, at the end of the month, on the subject of the bank for labourers out of employment, and with gratuitous loans; the reimbursements are seldom behindhand, and we perceive already much good that this spreads in this quarter. Now, at least, poor families can get through the dull season for work without putting their linens and beds in the Monte de Piété. Then when work returns, you should

see with what spirit they put themselves to it; they are so proud that confidence is placed in their work and their probity! And, indeed, it is not only this you should see. Besides, how they bless you for having lent them the wherewithal! Yes, my lord, they bless you, you; for, although you say you have done nothing in its institution but to nominate Germain for head cashier; and that it is an unknown who has done this good work, we like better to believe that it is to you we owe it; it is more natural.

"Besides, there is a famous trumpet to repeat on every occasion that it is you we should bless; this trumpet is Madame Pipelet, who repeats to every one that it is only her *king of all tenants* (excuse me, Monsieur Rodolphe, she always calls you so) who can have done this charitable work, and her *old, dear Alfred* is of her opinion. As to him, he is so proud and so pleased with his office of director of the bank, that he says that the employment of M. Cabron is *be nothing to him*. To end your family of protégés, my lord, I will add that Germain has read in the papers that Martial, a planter in Algiers, had been spoken of with great praises for the courage he had shown in repulsing, at the head of his farmers, an attack of thievish Arabs, and that his wife, as intrepid as himself, had been slightly wounded in the side while she was discharging her gun like a real grenadier. From that time, they say in the papers, she has been called *Madame Carabine*.

"Excuse this long letter, my lord, but I thought you would not be sorry to hear from us concerning those whose good Providence you have been. I write you from the farm at Bouqueval where we have been since the spring with our good mother. Germain leaves every morning for his business, and he returns at night. In the autumn we shall go back to live in Paris. How strange it is, Monsieur Rodolphe, I, who never loved the country, adore it now. I make it clear to myself; it is because Germain loves it to much. Speaking of the farm, Monsieur Rodolphe, you, who undoubtedly know where that good little Goualeuse is—if you have an opportunity, tell her how we always remember her as one of the sweetest and best beings in the world; and that, as to myself, I never think of our happiness without saying to myself, since M. Rodolphe was also the M. Rodolphe of that dear Fleur de Marie, through his care she must be as happy as we others; and this makes my happiness yet more perfect.

"My God! my God! How I talk! What will you say to me, my lord? But ah! you are so good! And then, you see, it is your fault if I chatter as much and as joyously as *Papa Crétu* and *Ramondette*, who, no longer dare to rival me in singing. Indeed, Monsieur Rodolphe, I can tell you, I put it into their teeth:

"You will not refuse us one request, will you, my lord? If you give a name to our dear little child, it seems to us it will bring her good fortune, it will be like a happy star for her; believe it, Monsieur Rodolphe, sometimes my good Germain and I almost congratulate ourselves for having known so much sorrow, because we feel doubly how happy our child will be not to know what is the misery through which we have passed.

"If I close, by telling you, Monsieur Rodolphe,

that we endeavour to aid poor people here and there, according to our means, it is not to boast of ourselves, but that you may know we do not keep to ourselves alone all the happiness you have given us; besides, we always say to those we succour, 'It is not we that you must thank and bless, it is M. Rodolphe, the best, the most generous man that there is in the world;' and they take you for a kind of *saint*, if nothing more.

"Adieu, my lord! believe me, when our little girl shall begin to spell, the first word she shall read will be your name, Monsieur Rodolphe! and afterward, those words you caused to be written upon my trousseau,

'Labour and wisdom—honour and happiness.'

"With the help of these four words, our tenderness and our care, we hope, my lord, that our child will be always worthy to speak the name of him who has been our good Providence, and that of all the wretched ones he has known.

"Pardon, my lord, for finishing this; I have such large tears in my eyes—they are good tears—excuse, if you please—it is not my fault—but I cannot see clearly, so that I write badly.

"I have the honour, my lord, to salute you with as much respect as gratitude,

"RIGOLETTE, wife of Germain."

"P.S.—Ah, my God! my lord, in reading over my letter, I perceive that I have very often written *Monsieur Rodolphe*. You will pardon me! I may hope so! You know well that under one name or another, we respect and bless you the same, my lord."

CHAPTER V.

"Dear little Rigolotte," said Clémence, softened by the letter which Rodolphe had just read. "This simple epistle is full of sensibility."

"Undoubtedly," replied Rodolphe, "a benefit was never better bestowed. Our protégée is endowed with an excellent disposition; she has a heart of gold, and our dear child appreciates her as we do," added he, addressing his daughter. Then, struck with her paleness and emotion, he cried,

"But what is the matter?"

"Alas, what a sad contrast between my position and that of Rigolotte. Work and wisdom—honour and happiness—these four words tell all that has happened to her. A laborious and sensible daughter, a beloved wife, a happy mother, an honoured woman—such is her destiny—while I—"

"Great God, what do you say?"

"Pardon, my good father, do not accuse me of ingratitude, but, notwithstanding your ineffable tenderness, notwithstanding that of my second mother, notwithstanding your sovereign power, notwithstanding the respect and splendour with which I am surrounded, my shape is incurable. Nothing can annihilate the past—once, more, pardon me, my father: I have until now concealed it from you, but the remembrance of my former degradation throws me into despair—it kills me."

"Clémence, do you hear her?" cried Rodolphe, in despair.

"But, my poor child," said Clémence, taking

affectionately the hands of Fleur de Marie in her own, "our tenderness, the affection of those who surround you, and which you so well merit, does not all this prove to you that the past should be to you only a vain and bad dream?"

"Oh fatality, fatality," resumed Rodolphe. "Now I curse my fears, my silence; that sad idea, so long rooted in her mind, has made there, unknown to us, dreadful ravages, and it is too late to contend against this deplorable error; alas! how unfortunate I am."

"Courage, my good friend," said Clémence to Rodolphe; "you just now said it is better to know the enemy which threatens us. We now know the cause of our dear child's sorrow; we shall triumph over it, because we shall have reason, justice, and our tenderness on our side."

"And then at last, because she will see that her affection, if it were incurable, would render ours incurable also," replied Rodolphe, "for in truth it would be to despair of all justice, human and Divine, if this poor child had only a change of sufferings."

After a silence of some moments, during which Fleur de Marie appeared to be collecting herself, she took with one hand that of Rodolphe, with the other that of Clémence, and said to them with a voice expressive of deep emotion,

"Listen to me, my good father, and you also, my tender mother: this day is a solemn one—God has granted, and I thank him for it, that it should be impossible to me to conceal from you any longer what I feel. In a little time I should, in any event, have made to you the confession you are now about to hear, for all suffering has an end, and concealed as mine has been, I should not have been able to keep silence to you much longer."

"Ah! I understand all," cried Rodolphe; "there is no longer any hope for her."

"I hope for the future, my father, and this hope gives me strength to speak to you thus."

"And what can you hope for the future, my poor child, since your present fate causes you only grief and bitterness?"

"I am going to tell you, my father; but before all, permit me to recall the past to you, to own to you before God who hears me, what I have felt up to this time."

"Speak, speak, we hear you," said Rodolphe, seating himself with Clémence near Fleur de Marie.

"While I remained at Paris, near you, my father," said Fleur de Marie, "I was so happy, oh, so completely happy, that those delicious days would not be too well paid for by years of suffering. You see I have at least known what happiness is."

"During some days perhaps."

"Yes, but what pure and unmingled felicity! Love surrounded me then, as ever, with the tenderest care. I gave myself up without fear to the emotions of gratitude and affection which every moment raised my heart to you. The future dazzled me: a father to adore, a second mother to love doubly, for she had taken the place of my own, whom I had never known—I must own everything; my pride was excited in spite of myself, so much was I honoured in belonging to you. When the few persons of your household, who at Paris had occasion to speak to me, called me 'your highness,' I could not prevent myself from being proud of this title. If I thought then, at times, vaguely of the past, it was to say to myself, 'I, formerly so humble, the

beloved daughter of a sovereign prince who is blessed and revered by every one; I, formerly so miserable, I am enjoying all the splendours of luxury, and of an almost royal existence.' Alas! my father, my fortune was so unforeseen, your power surrounded me with such a splendid éclat, that I was excusable perhaps in allowing myself to become so blinded."

"Excusable! nothing was more natural, my poor beloved angel: what wrong was there in being proud of a rank which was your own, of enjoying the advantages of the position to which I had restored you? At that time I recollect you were delightfully gay; how many times have I seen you fall into my arms as if overpowered with happiness, and heard you say to me with an enchanting accent, 'My father, it is too much, too much happiness.' Unfortunately, these are only recollections; they lulled me into a deceitful security, and since then I have not been enough alarmed at the cause of your melancholy."

"But tell us, then, my child," asked Clémence, "who has changed into sadness this pure, this legitimate joy which you first felt?"

"Alas! a very sad and entirely unforeseen circumstance."

"What circumstance?"

"You recollect, my father," said Fleur de Marie, without being able to conquer a shuddering of horror; "you remember the sad scene which preceded our departure from Paris, when your carriage was stopped near the barrier?"

"Yes," replied Rodolphe, sadly. "Brave Chourineur, after having again saved my life, he died there before us, saying, *Heaven is just: I have killed, they kill me.*"

"Ah, well, my father, at the moment when this unfortunate man was expiring, do you know whom I saw looking intently at me? Oh, that look, that look, it has pursued me ever since," added Fleur de Marie, shuddering.

"What look? of whom do you speak?" cried Rodolphe.

"Of the *Ogresse of the Tapis Rouge*," murmured Fleur de Marie.

"That monster, have you seen her again? and where?"

"You did not perceive her in the tavern where the Chourineur breathed his last. She was among the women who surrounded him."

"Ah, now," said Rodolphe, dejectedly, "I understand: already struck with terror by the murder of the Chourineur, you thought there was something providential in this dreadful meeting."

"It is but too true, my father. At the sight of the *Ogresse* I felt a mortal shudder. It seemed to me that, under her look, my heart, until then radiant with happiness and hope, was suddenly frozen. Yes; to meet this woman at the moment when the Chourineur was dying, and repeating the words '*Heaven is just*,' this seemed to me a providential preproof of my proud forgetfulness of the past, which I ought to expiate by humiliation and repentance."

"But the past was laid upon you: you can answer for it before God."

"You were constrained, intoxicated, unfortunate child. Once precipitated, in spite of yourself, in this abyss, you could not leave it notwithstanding your remorse, your terror, your despair; thanks to the atrocious indifference of that society of which you were the victim. You saw yourself forever chained in that cavern; the

chance which placed you in my path could alone have dragged you from it."

"And then, my child, as your father has told you, you were the victim, not the accomplice, of this infamy," cried Clémence.

"But this infamy, I have submitted to it, my mother," sadly rejoined Fleur de Marie; "nothing can annihilate these horrible recollections. They pursue me incessantly no longer, as formerly, in the midst of the peaceable inhabitants of a farm, or of the degraded women, my companions at Saint Lazarus, but they pursue me even to this palace, peopled with the *élite* of Germany. They pursue me even to the arms of my father, even to the steps of his throne."

Fleur de Marie melted into tears. Rodolphe and Clémence remained mute before this frightful expression of an invincible remorse. They, too, wept, for they felt the powerlessness of their consolations.

"Since then," resumed Fleur de Marie, drying her tears, "at every moment of the day I say to myself, with a bitter shame, 'I am honoured, I am revered; the most eminent persons, the most venerable, surround me with respect; in sight of the whole court, the sister of an emperor has deigned to fasten the bandeau upon my head; and I have lived in the mad of the city—have been spoken to familiarly by thieves and assassins!' Oh, my father! pardon me; but the more my position is elevated, the more I have been struck with the profound degradation into which I had fallen. At each new homage which is rendered me I feel myself guilty of a profanation. Think of it, oh, my God! after having been what I *have been*, to suffer old men to bow before me—to suffer noble young women, women justly respected, who feel themselves flattered to approach me—to suffer, finally, that princesses, doubly angust by age and by their sacerdotal character, should heap upon me favours and praises, is not this impious and sacrilegious? And then, if you knew, my father, what I have suffered—what I still suffer every day, in saying, 'If it should please God that the past should be known, with what merited scorn would she be treated who is now elevated so high. What a just—what a frightful punishment!'"

"But, unfortunate child, my wife and I, we know the past, we are worthy of our rank, and yet we love—we adore you."

"You have for me the blind tenderness of a father and a mother."

"And all the good you have done since your abode here—this beautiful and holy institution, this asylum opened by you to orphans and poor abandoned girls—those admirable cares of intelligence and devotion with which you watch over them—your insisting that they call themselves *your sisters*—wishing that they should call you so, since, in fact, you treat them as such, is this nothing to atone for faults which were not your own? Finally, the affection which is shown for you by the worthy abbess of Saint Hermangilda, who did not know you till after your arrival here, do you not owe it altogether to the elevation of your mind, to the beauty of your soul, to your sincere piety?"

"While the praises from the abbess of Saint Hermangilda are addressed only to my present conduct, I enjoy them without scruple, my father; but when she quotes my example to the noble ladies who are engaged in religious offices in the abbey—when they see in me a model of

all the virtues, I am ready to die of confusion, as if I were the accomplice of a wicked falsehood."

After a long silence, Rodolphe resumed, with deep dejection.

"I see—I despair of persuading you: reason is weak when opposed to a conviction, the more firm because it has its source in a generous and elevated sentiment. Since every moment you throw back a look on the past, the contrast between these remembrances and your present position must be, indeed, a continual punishment to you. Pardon me in turn, poor child."

"You, my good father—you ask pardon of me, and for what? Good Heaven!"

"For not having foreseen your susceptibility. From the exceeding delicacy of your heart, I ought to have divined it; and yet, what could I do? It was my duty solemnly to acknowledge you as my daughter. Then this respect, of which the homage is so painful to you, comes of necessity to surround you. Yes; but I was wrong in one point. I have been, do you see, too proud of you—I have wished too much to enjoy the charms of your beauty—those charms of the mind which surprised every one who approached you. I ought to have hidden my treasure—to have lived almost in retirement with Clémence and you; I should have renounced these fêtes—these numerous receptions, at which I loved so much to see you shine; thinking, foolishly, to elevate you so high—so high, that the past would disappear entirely from your eyes. But, alas! the reverse has taken place, and, as you have told me, the more elevated you have been, the deeper and more dark has seemed the abyss from which I drew you. Yet once again, it is my fault. I meant, however, to do right; but I was mistaken," said Rodolphe, drying his tears. "But I was mistaken; and then I supposed myself pardoned too soon. The vengeance of God was not satisfied: it still pursues me in the unhappiness of my daughter!"

A discreet knock at the door of the saloon which adjoined the oratory of Fleur de Marie interrupted this sad conversation.

Rodolphe rose, and half opened the door. He saw Murphy, who said,

"I ask pardon of your royal highness for disturbing you, but a ~~countess~~ from Prince Herkausen Oldenzaal has just brought a letter, which, he says, is very important, and must be delivered immediately to your royal highness."

"Thank you, my good Murphy; do not go away," said Rodolphe, with a sigh; "presently I shall want to talk with you."

And the prince, having shut the door, remained a moment in the saloon, to read the letter which Murphy had just brought him. It was in these words:

"MY LORD,

"May I hope that the ties of relationship which attach me to your royal highness, and the friendship with which you have always deigned to honour me, will excuse me for a proceeding which might be considered very rash, if it was not imposed by the conscience of an honest man.

"It is fifteen months, my lord, since you returned from France, bringing with you a daughter, so much the more beloved because you had thought her forever lost, while, on the contrary, she had never quitted her mother, whom you married at Paris *in extremis*, in order to legitimize the birth of the Princess Amelia, who is

thus the equal of the other princesses of the Germanic Confederation.

"Her birth is, then, sovereign, her beauty is incomparable, her heart is as worthy of her birth as her mind is worthy of her beauty, as my sister, the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda, has written me. The abbess, as you know, has often the honour of seeing this well-beloved daughter of your royal highness.

"During the time which my son passed at Gerolstein he saw, almost every day, the Princess Amelia; he loves her desperately, but he has always concealed this passion.

"I have thought it my duty, my lord, to inform you of this circumstance. You have deigned, as a father, to receive my son, and have invited him to the bosom of your family, and to live in that intimacy which was so precious to him. I should fall in loyalty to your highness if I dissimulated a circumstance which modified the reception which was reserved for my son.

"I know that it would be madness in us to dare hope to ally ourselves more nearly to the family of your royal highness.

"I know that the daughter of whom you have so good a right to be proud may aspire to a higher destiny.

"But I know, also, that you are the most tender of fathers, and that if you ever judged my son worthy of belonging to you, and of contributing to the happiness of the Princess Amelia, you would not be deterred by the grave disproportion which places such a fortune beyond our hopes.

"It is not for me to make a eulogium of Henry, my lord, but I appeal to the encouragement and to the praise you have so often condescended to bestow on him.

"I dare not, and I cannot say more to you, my lord; my emotion is too profound.

"Whatever may be your determination, believe that we shall submit to it with respect, and that I shall be always faithful to the sentiments of the most profound devotion with which I have the honour to be,

"Your royal highness's most humble and obedient servant,
GUSTAVUS PAUL,

"Prince of Herkensa Oldenzaal."

CHAPTER VI.

AFTER reading the letter of the prince, the father of Henry, Rodolphe remained for some time sad and thoughtful; a ray of hope then lightened up his face; he returned to his daughter, on whom Clémence was vainly lavishing the most tender consolations.

"My child, you have yourself said it was God's will that this day should be one of solemn explanations," said Rodolphe to Fleur de Marie; "I did not anticipate a new and grave circumstance which was to justify your words."

"To what does it refer, my father?"

"My friend, what is it?"

"New causes of fear!"

"For you."

"For me?"

"You have confessed to us but half your troubles, my poor child."

"Be so kind as to explain yourself, my father," said Fleur de Marie, blushing.

"Now I can do it; I could not sobner, not knowing how much you despaired of your fate. Listen, my beloved daughter! You believe your-

self, or, rather, you are, very unhappy. When at the beginning of our conversation, you spoke to me of the hopes which remained to you, I understood—my heart was broken, for I was to part with you forever—that I was to see you shut yourself up in a cloister—to see you descend living to a tomb. Is it your wish to enter a convent?"

"My father!"

"My child, is this true?"

"Yes, if you will permit me to do it," replied Fleur de Marie, with a stifled voice.

"Leave us!" cried Clémence.

"The Abbey of Saint Hermangilda is very near Gerolstein. I shall see you often, you and my father."

"Do you consider that such vows are eternal, my dear child? you are only eighteen years old, and perhaps some day—"

"Oh, I shall never repent the resolution I have taken. I shall never find repose and forgetfulness but in the solitude of the cloister, if you, my father, and you, my second mother, continue your affection to me."

"The duties, the consolations of the religious life might, indeed," said Rodolphe, "if they could not heal at least, calm the sorrows of your poor depressed and distracted spirit. And though half the happiness of my life is the forfeit, I may perhaps, approve your resolution. I know what you suffer, and I do not say that renouncing the world may not be the fatally logical end of your sorrowful existence."

"What, you also, Rodolphe," cried Clémence.

"Permit me, my friend, to express all my thoughts," replied Rodolphe. Then addressing his daughter, "But before taking this last determination, we must examine if there may not be other prospects for the future, more agreeable to your wishes and ours. In this case, I should not regard any sacrifice, if I could secure you such a future existence."

Fleur de Marie and Clémence made a movement of surprise. Rodolphe continued, fixing his eyes on his daughter,

"What do you think of your cousin Henry? After a moment of hesitation, she threw herself weeping into the arms of the prince.

"You love him, my poor child?"

"You never asked me, my father," replied Fleur de Marie, drying her tears.

"My friend, we were not deceived," said Clémence.

"So you love him," added Rodolphe, taking his daughter's hands in his own, "you love him well, my dear child?"

"Oh if you knew," replied Fleur de Marie, "how much it has cost me to hide from you the sentiment as soon as I discovered it in my heart—alas, at the least question from you, I should have owned everything. But shame restrained me, and would always have restrained me."

"And do you think that Henry knows your love for him?" said Rodolphe.

"Great God, my father, I do not think so," cried Fleur de Marie, in terror.

"And he, do you think he loves you?"

"No, my father, no—oh, I hope not—he will suffer too much."

"And how did this love come, my beloved angel?"

"Alas, almost without my knowing it—you remember the picture of the page?"

"Which is in the apartment of the Abbess of Saint Hermangilda—it was Henry's portrait."

"Yes, dear father, believing this to be a painting of another age, one day in your presence, I did not conceal from the superior that I was struck with the beauty of this portrait. You said to me then, in jest, that the picture represented one of our relations of the olden time, who, when very young, had displayed great courage and excellent qualities. The grace of this figure, joined to what you told me of the noble character of this relative, added yet to my first impression. From that day, I often took pleasure in recalling this portrait, and that without the least scruple, believing that it belonged to one of my cousins long since dead. 'Little by little I habituated myself to these gentle thoughts, knowing that it was not permitted me to love on this earth,' added Fleur de Marie with a heart-rending expression, and her tears bursting forth anew. 'I gave to these romantic reveries a sort of melancholy interest, half smiles, half tears. I looked upon the pretty page of the past time as a lover beyond the grave, whom I should perhaps one day meet in eternity. It seemed to me that such a love was alone worthy of a heart which belonged entirely to you, my father. But pardon me these sad, childish imaginations.'

"Nothing can be more touching, on the contrary, poor child," said Clémence.

"Now," replied Rodolphe, "I understand why you one day reproached me with an air of chagrin for having deceived you about the picture."

"Alas, yes, dear father. Judge of my confusion when, afterward, the superior informed me that this picture was that of her nephew, one of our relations. Then my trouble was extreme; I endeavoured to forget my first impressions, but the more I endeavoured, the more they became rooted in my heart, in consequence even of the perseverance of my efforts. Unfortunately, yet, I often hear you, dear father, praising the heart, the mind, the character of Prince Henry."

"You already loved him, my dear child, even when you had as yet seen only his portrait, and heard of his rare qualities."

"Without loving him, I felt towards him an attraction, for which I bitterly reproached myself. But I consoled myself by thinking that no one in the world would know this sad secret, which covered me with shame in my own eyes. To dare to love, me, me, and then not to be contented with your tenderness and that of my second mother. Did I not owe to you enough to employ all my strength, all the resources of my heart in loving you both? Oh, believe me, among the reproaches I made myself, these last were the most painful. Finally, I saw my cousin for the first time, at that grand fête you gave to the Archduchess Sophia. Prince Henry resembled his portrait in such a striking manner, that I recognised him immediately. The same evening, dear father, you presented my cousin to me, authorizing between us the intimacy which our relationship permitted."

"And soon you loved each other?"

"Ah, my father, he expressed his respect, his attachment, his admiration, with so much eloquence; you had yourself told me so much good of him."

"He deserved it; there is no more elevated character; there is no better or braver heart."

"Your pardon, dear father, do not praise him so much; I am already so unhappy."

"And I must convince you of all the rare qualities of your cousin. What I say surprises you; I understand it, my child—go on."

"I felt the danger that I incurred in seeing Prince Henry every day, and yet I could not withdraw myself from the danger. Notwithstanding my blind confidence in you, dear father, I dared not express my fears to you. I directed all my courage to concealing my love; however, I owe to you, dear father, notwithstanding my remorse, often in this fraternal intimacy of every day, forgetting the past, I felt gleams of happiness till then unknown to me, but followed soon, alas! by dark despair, when I again fell under the influence of my sad recollections. For, alas! if they pursued me in the midst of the homage and respect of persons almost indifferent to me, judge, judge, dear father, of my tortures when Prince Henry lavished on me the most delicate praises, followed me with such frank and pious adoration; putting, as he said, the brotherly attachment that he felt for me under the holy protection of his mother, whom he loved when he was very young. I endeavoured to merit this sweet name of sister, which he bestowed upon me, by advising my cousin respecting his future prospects, according to my weak knowledge; by interesting myself in all which related to him; by promising always to ask of you such assistance for him as you might be able to give. But often, also, what torments have I felt, how I have restrained my tears when, by chance, Prince Henry interrogated me about my infancy, my early youth. Oh! to deceive—always to deceive, always to fear, always to lie, always to tremble, before the inexorable look of one's judge. Oh! my father, I was guilty, I know it; I had no right to love; but I expiated this sad love by many bitter sorrows. What shall I say to you? The departure of Prince Henry, in causing me a new and violent chagrin, enlightened me—I saw that I loved him more than I imagined. Thus," added Fleur de Marie, with deep dejection, and as if this confession had exhausted her strength, "I should have soon made you this avowal, for this fatal love has filled up the measure of my sufferings. Say, now that you know all, my father, is there any future prospect for me but that of the cloister?"

"There is another, my child; yes, and this future is as sweet, as smiling, as happy, as the other is dark and gloomy."

"What do you say, dear father?"

"Hear me, in my turn. You must feel that I love you too much, that my tenderness is too clear-sighted, to have allowed your love and that of Henry to have escaped me; at the end of a few days I was certain that he loved you, more even, perhaps, than you loved him."

"My father, no, no; it is impossible; he does not love me at this time."

"He loves you, I tell you; he loves you passionately, to madness, almost."

"Oh! my God! my God!"

"Listen farther. When I told you that pleasure about the picture I did not know that Henry was about to visit his aunt at Gerolstein. When he came, I yielded to the inclination I have always felt towards him; I invited him to come to see us often. I had before always treated him like my son; I changed in no degree my manner towards him. At the end of some days, Clémence and myself no longer doubted the regard you felt for each other. If your position was painful, my poor child, mine was not less so, it was extremely delicate. As a father, knowing the rare and excellent qualities of Henry, I could not but be profoundly

happy at your attachment, for I could never have dreamed of a husband more worthy of you."

"Ah! dear father, pity, pity!"

"But, as a man of honour, I thought of the sad past life of my child. Thus, far from encouraging the hopes of Henry, I gave him, in several conversations, advice absolutely contrary from what he would have expected from me if I had thought of giving him your hand. In such a situation, one so delicate, as a father and a man of honour, it was incumbent on me to keep a rigorous neutrality, not to encourage the love of your cousin, but to treat him with the same affability as formerly. You have been hitherto so unhappy, my beloved child, that seeing you, so to speak, reviving under the impulse of this noble and pure love, I could not for anything in the world have deprived you of its divine and rare joys. Admitting even that this love must afterward be broken off, you would at least have known some days of innocent happiness, and then, finally, this love might secure your future repose."

"My repose?"

"Listen farther. The father of Henry, Prince Paul, has just written to me—here is his letter. Though he regards this alliance as an unhoped-for favour, he asks of me your hand for his son, who, he says, feels for you the most respectful, the most passionate love."

"Oh, my God! my God!" said Fleur de Marie, hiding her face in her hands, "I might have been so happy!"

"Courage, my well-beloved daughter; if you wish it, this happiness is yours," cried Rodolphe, tenderly.

"Oh! never, never; do you forget?"

"I forget nothing; but if to-morrow you enter the convent, not only I lose you forever, but you quit me for a life of tears and austerity. Ah! well! to lose you, to lose you: let me at least know that you are happy, and married to the man you love and who adores you."

"Married to him! Me, dear father!"

"Yes; but on the condition that, immediately after your marriage, contracted here at night, without other witnesses than Murphy for you and Baron Graun for Henry, you shall both go to some tranquil retreat in Switzerland or Italy, to live unknown as wealthy citizens. Now, my beloved daughter, do you know why I resign myself to a separation from you? Do you know why I desire Henry to quit his title when he is out of Germany. It is because I am sure that, in the midst of a solitary happiness, concentrated in an existence deprived of all display, little by little you will forget this odious past, which is especially painful to you because it forms such a bitter contrast to the ceremonious homage with which you are constantly surrounded."

"Rodolphe is right," cried Clémence: "alone with Henry, continually happy with his happiness and your own, you will no longer have time to think, my dear child, of your former sorrows."

"Then, as it will be impossible for me to be long without seeing you, every year Clémence and I will go to visit you."

"And some day, when the wound of which you suffer, poor little angel, shall be healed, when you shall have found forgetfulness in happiness, and this moment will come sooner than you think, you will return to us, never to leave us."

"Forgetfulness in happiness," murmured Fleur de Marie, who, in spite of herself, was soothed by this enchanting vision.

"Yes, yes, my child," replied Clémence, "when at every moment of the day you see yourself blessed, respected, adored by the husband of your choice, by the man whose noble and generous heart your father has extolled to you a thousand times, shall you have leisure to think of the past, and even if you should think of it, why should the past sadden you? why should it prevent you from believing in the radiant felicity of your husband?"

"Finally, it is true, for tell me, my child," replied Rodolphe, who could scarcely restrain his tears at seeing that his daughter hesitated, "adored by your husband, when you shall have the knowledge and the proof of the happiness which he owes to you, what reproaches can you make yourself?"

"My father," said Fleur de Marie, forgetting the past for this ineffable hope, "can so much happiness be reserved for me?"

"Ah, I was sure of it," cried Rodolphe, in an ecstasy of triumphant joy; "is there a father who wishes it, who cannot restore happiness to an adored child?"

"She merits so much that we ought to be heard, my friend," said Clémence, sharing the transport of her husband.

"To marry Henry, and some day to pass my whole life between him, my second mother, and my father," replied Fleur de Marie, yielding more and more to the sweet intoxication of her thoughts.

"Yes, my beloved angel, we shall all be happy. I will reply to Henry's father that I consent to the marriage," cried Rodolphe, pressing Fleur de Marie in his arms with an indescribable emotion. "Take courage, our separation will be short; the new duties which your marriage will impose upon you will confirm your steps still more in that path of forgetfulness and felicity in which you will henceforth tread, for finally, if you should one day be a mother, it would not be only for yourself that it would be necessary you should be happy."

"Ah!" cried Fleur de Marie, with a heart-rending cry, for this word *mother* awoke her from the enchanting dream which was lulling her. "Mother? me? Oh never. I am unworthy this holy name; I should die with shame before my child, if I had not died with shame before its father in making him the avowal of the past."

"What does she say, gracious Heaven!" cried Rodolphe, stunned by the abrupt change.

"I a mother!" resumed Fleur de Marie, with bitter despair, "I respected, I blessed by an innocent and pure child, I formerly the object of everybody's scorn, I profane thus the sacred name of mother? Oh, never! miserable fool that I was to allow myself to be drawn away to an unworthy hope."

"My daughter, listen to me in pity."

Fleur de Marie stood upright, pale, and beautiful, in the majesty of incurable misfortune.

"My father, we forget that before marrying me Prince Henry must know my past life."

"I have not forgotten it," cried Rodolphe.

"He must know all, he shall know all."

"And would you not rather see me die than see me so degraded in his eyes?"

"But he shall also know what an irresistible fatality plunged you into the abyss. He shall know your restoration."

"And he will finally feel," replied Clémence, pressing Fleur de Marie in her arms, "that

when I call you my daughter, he may without shame call you his wife."

"And I, my mother, I love Prince Henry too much, I esteem him too much ever to give him a hand which has been touched by the bandits of the city."

A short time after this sad scene, the official Gazette of Gerolstein contained the following announcement:

"Yesterday took place, at the Grand-ducal Abbey of Saint Hermangilda, in presence of his royal highness the reigning grand-duke and all the court, the taking of the veil by the very high and very powerful princess, her Royal Highness Amelia of Gerolstein.

"The novitiate was received by the most illustrious and most reverend Lord Charles Maximian, archbishop duke of Oppenheim; Lord Annibal Andre Montano, of the Princes of Delpha, Bishop of Ceuta in *partibus infidelium* and apostolic nuncio, gave the salutation and the papal benediction.

"The sermon was pronounced by the most Reverend Lord Peter d'Asfeld, canon of the Chapter of Cologne, count of the holy Roman Empire—VENI CREATOR OPTIME."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PROFESSION.

Rodolphe to Clémence.

Gerolstein, Jan. 12, 1842.*

In assuring me to-day of the complete restoration of your father's health, my dear friend, you give me reason to hope that you can, by the end of the week, bring him back here. I foresaw that in the residence at Rosenfeld, situated in the midst of forests, he would be exposed, notwithstanding all possible precaution, to the severity of our cold; unfortunately, his passion for hunting rendered our advice useless. I conjure you, Clémence, as soon as your father can bear the motion of the carriage, to set out immediately, quit that wild country and wild dwelling, only habitable for those old Germans whose bodies were of iron and whose race has disappeared.

I fear lest you also should fall sick: the fatigues of this hurried journey, the anxiety which preyed upon you until you reached your father, all these causes must have affected you sadly. Why could I not accompany you?

Clémence, I beg of you, be not imprudent; I know how bold and how devoted you are. I know how anxiously you will attend to your father; but he will be as much in despair as myself if your health should be impaired by this journey. I deplore doubly the illness of the count, for it takes you from me at a moment when I could have drawn deeply up from the fountain of consolation of your tenderness.

The ceremony of the *profession* of our poor child is fixed for to-morrow—to-morrow, the 13th of January, fatal epoch. It was upon the *thirteenth of January* that I drew the sword against my father.

Ah! my friend, I too soon thought myself forgiven. The intoxicating hope of passing my life with you and my daughter made me forget that it was not myself, but that it was *she* who

had been punished thus far, and that my punishment was still to come.

And it did come—when, six months since, the unhappy one unveiled to us the double torment of her heart; *her incurable shame at the past, added to her unhappy love for Henry.*

These two bitter and burning sensations, the one heightened by the other by a fatal logic, caused her to take up the unconquerable resolution to take the veil. You know, my dear friend, how, in combating this design with all the strength of our adoration for her, we could not deny that her worthy and courageous conduct should have been ours. How could we answer those terrible words?

I love Prince Henry too well to give him a hand which has been touched by the bandits of the city.

She was obliged to sacrifice herself to her noble scruples, to the ineffaceable remembrance of her shame; she has done it valiantly; she has renounced the splendors of the world; she has descended from the steps of a throne to kneel, clothed in sackcloth, upon the pavement of a church; she crossed her hands upon her breast, bowed her angelic head, and her beautiful fair locks, which I loved so much, and which I preserve as a treasure, fell, cut off by the sharp iron.

Oh! my friend, you know our heart-rending emotion at this mournful and solemn moment; this emotion is, even now, as poignant as at the time. In writing these words to you, I weep like a child.

I have seen her this morning; although she seemed to me less pale than usual, and declares she does not suffer, her health makes me anxious. Alas! when under the veil and band which surround her noble forehead, I see her attenuated features, which have the cold whiteness of marble, and which make her large blue eyes seem larger still, I cannot help dreaming over the gentle and pure splendor with which her beauty sparkled at our marriage. Never did she look so charmingly. Our happiness seemed to radiate from her beautiful countenance.

As I told you, I saw her this morning; she has not been informed that the Princess Juliana voluntarily resigns in her favour the dignity of abbess; to-morrow, therefore, on the day of her *profession*, our child will be elected abbess, as there is a unanimous desire among the noble ladies of the community to confer upon her this dignity.

Since the beginning of her novitiate, there has been but one opinion upon her piety, her charity, her religious exactness in fulfilling all the duties of her order, whose austerities she exaggerates most unfortunately. She has exercised in this convent the influence which she exercises everywhere without attempting to do so, and in ignorance of the fact which increases her power.

Her conversation this morning confirmed my doubts. She has not found in the solitude of the cloister, and in the severe practice of monastic duties, repose and forgetfulness. She congratulated herself, however, upon her resolution, which she considers the accomplishment of an imperious duty; but she suffers continually, for she is not formed for those mystical contemplations, in the midst of which, certain people, forgetting all affection, all earthly remembrances, are lost in ascetic delights.

"No; Fleur de Marie believes, prays, submits herself to the rigorous and harsh observance of her order; she pours out the most evangelical

* About six months have passed since Fleur de Marie entered the Convent of St. Hermangilda as a novice.

consolations, the most humble cares upon the poor sick women who are taken care of in the hospital of the abbey. She has even refused the assistance of a lay sister for the moderate care of that cold and bare cell where we remarked with such sad astonishment, you remember, my dear friend, the dried branches of her little rose-bush, suspended beneath her crucifix. She is, indeed, the cherished example, the venerated model of the community. But she confessed to me this morning, while bitterly reproaching herself for this weakness, that she is not so much absorbed by the duties and austerities of a religious life as to prevent the past from constantly appearing before her, not only as it was, but as it might have been.

"I blame myself for it, my father," said she to me, with that calm and gentle resignation which you know belongs to her. "I blame myself, but I cannot help often thinking that if God had spared me the degradation which has withered forever my future life, I might have lived always near you, beloved by the husband of your choice. In spite of myself, my life is divided between these grievous regrets and the frightful recollections of the city; in vain I pray to God to free me from these frightful recollections, to fill my heart alone with pious love for him, with holy hopes; in short, to take me entirely to himself, since I wish to give myself entirely to him. He does not grant my prayers—undoubtedly because earthly thoughts render me unworthy to enter into communion with him."

"But then," cried I, seized with a foolish glimmering of hope, "there is still time—to-day your novitiate ends; but it is not until to-morrow that your solemn profession will take place; you are still free—renounce this rude and austere life, which does not afford you the consolation you expected; if you must suffer, come and suffer in our arms: let our tenderness assuage your sorrows."

"Shaking sadly her head, she answered me, with that inflexible justness of reasoning which has so often struck us,

"It is true, my dear father, the solitude of the cloister is sad for me—for me, already accustomed to your kindness every moment. It is true, I am pursued with bitter regrets and grievous recollections; but, at least, I have the consciousness of fulfilling a duty; I understand, I know, that everywhere but here I should be out of place; I should again be in that cruelly false position in which I have already suffered so much both for myself and for you—for I, too, am proud. Your daughter shall be such as she ought to be; shall do what she ought to do; shall suffer what she ought to suffer. To-morrow all will know from what a slough you have rescued me: in seeing me repentant at the foot of the cross, they will, perhaps, pardon the past in consideration of my present humility. It would not be so, my dear father, if they saw me, as a few months ago, shining in the midst of the splendours of your court. Besides, to satisfy the just and severe demands of the world, will satisfy myself; and I am grateful to God with all the power of my soul when I think that *He alone* can offer to your daughter an asylum and position worthy of her and of you: a position, in short, which shall not form a sad contrast to my former degradation, and in which I can deserve the only respect which is due to me, that which is granted to repentance and sincere humility."

"Alas! Clémence, what could I reply to that?"

"Fatality! fatality! for this unfortunate child is endowed, so to speak, with an inexorable logic in all that concerns the sensitiveness of the heart and one's honour. With such a mind and soul, one cannot think of palliating or hiding false positions—we must suffer the imperious consequences."

"I left her, as usual, with a breaking heart.

"Without founding the least hope upon this interview, which will be the last before her profession, I said to myself, 'To-day she might renounce the cloister.' But you see, my dear friend, her will is irrevocable, and I must indeed agree with her, and repeat her words:

"*God alone can offer her an asylum and a position worthy of her and of me.*"

"Once more, her resolution is admirably logical, and suited to the position in society in which we are placed. With Fleur de Marie's exquisite sensibility, no other condition was possible for her. But I have often told you, my friend, if sacred duties, more sacred still than those of family, did not detain me in the midst of a people who love me, and to whom I stand, in a slight degree, in the place of Providence, I should go away with you, my daughter, Henry, and Murphy, to live happily and obscurely in some unknown retreat. Then, far from the imperious laws of a society which is powerless to cure the evils which it has caused, we might have forced this unhappy child into happiness and forgetfulness. While here, in the midst of splendour, of ceremony, as restrained as this, it was impossible. But still, once more, fatality! fatality! I cannot abdicate my power without compromising the happiness of this people, who rely upon me. Brave and worthy people! how little do they know how much their happiness costs me!"

"Adieu, a tender adieu, my beloved Clémence. It is a consolation to me to see you as afflicted as myself at the fate of my child, for thus I can say our sorrow, and there is no egotism in my suffering."

"Sometimes I ask myself, with fear, what would become of me without you, in the midst of such grievous circumstances? Often these thoughts make me still more sad at Fleur de Marie's fate; for you remain to me, you. But for her, who is there?"

"Adieu, a sad adieu, noble friend, good angel of unhappy days. Come back soon; this absence weighs upon you as well as me."

"My life and love to you! soul and heart to you! R."

"I send you this letter by a courier: in case of any unexpected change, I will despatch to you another immediately after the sad ceremony. A thousand wishes and hopes to your father for the establishment of his health. I forgot to give you intelligence of poor Henry; his state of health is better, and no longer gives us such anxiety. His excellent father, himself ill, has recovered strength to take care of Henry, to watch over him; a miracle of paternal love—which does not astonish us—the rest of us."

"Thus, my dear friend, to-morrow—to-morrow—fatal and unpropitious day for me."

"Yours forever,

R."

"Abbey of St. Hermangilde, 4 o'clock in the morning."

"Calm yourself, dear Clémence, calm yourself; although the hour in which I write this letter, and the place whence it is dated, might alarm you."

"Thanks to God, the danger is past, but the crisis was terrible."

"Yesterday, after having written to you, agitated by a fatal presentiment, in recalling to myself the paleness and appearance of suffering in my daughter, the state of weakness in which she had languished for some time, remembering, in short, that she was to pass in prayer, in a large, dry-cold church, almost all the night before her profession, I sent Murphy and David to the abbey to ask the Princess Juliana to permit them to remain, until to-morrow, in the outer house which Henry usually inhabited. Thus, my daughter could have prompt assistance, and I should have intelligence if, as I feared, strength could fail her to accomplish this rigorous, I will not say cruel, obligation to remain a January night in prayer in the excessive cold. I had also written to Fleur de Marie, that while I respected the exercise of her religious duties, I begged her to take care of her health, and to pass the evening in prayer in her cell, and not in the church. This is the letter she sent in reply:

"My dear father, I thank you deeply, and with all my heart, for this new and tender proof of your interest; have no anxiety, I believe. I am in the way of accomplishing my duty. Your daughter, my dear father, can show neither fear nor weakness. Such are the rules; I must conform to them. If some physical suffering result from it, with joy do I offer them to God! You will approve it, I hope; you, who have always practised renunciation and duty with so much courage. Adieu, my dear father. I will not say I am going to pray for you. When I pray to God, I always pray for you, for it is impossible to prevent mingling you with the Divinity I implore; you have been to me on earth what God, if I deserve it, will be to me in heaven.

"Deign this evening to bless in thought your daughter, my dear father. To-morrow she will be the spouse of the Lord.

"She kisses your hand with pious respect.

"SISTER AMELIA."

"This letter, which I could not read without shedding tears, reassured me; however, but little; I, too, must pass a sad evening. Night having come, I went to shut myself up in the pavilion which I have had built not far from the monument erected to my father's memory, in expectation of that fatal night.

"Towards one o'clock in the morning, I heard Murphy's voice; I shuddered with alarm; he had come in haste from the convent.

"How shall I tell you, my friend? As I had foreseen, the unfortunate child, notwithstanding her courage and strong will, had not strength to accomplish entirely the barbarous custom, which it had been impossible for the Princess Juliana to dispense with, as the rules on this subject were precise.

"At eight o'clock in the evening, Fleur de Marie knelt down on the stone pavement in the church. Until midnight she continued praying. But at this hour, overcome by her weakness, the horrible cold, and her emotion, for she wept long and silently, she fainted. Two nuns, who, by the Princess Juliana's order, had watched with her, took her up, and carried her to her cell.

"David was immediately called. Murphy came in a carriage to seek me; I flew to the convent; I was received by the Princess Juliana. She told me that David feared the sight of me would make too great an impression upon my daughter; that her fainting, from which she had recovered, presented nothing very alarming, having been only caused by great weakness.

"At first a horrible thought seized me. I feared they wished to hide from me some great misfortune, or, at least, to prepare me to hear it; but the superior said to me, 'I assure you, my lord, the Princess Amelia is out of danger; a simple cordial which Dr. David has given her has restored her strength.'

"I could not doubt what the abbess affirmed; I believed her, and awaited intelligence from my daughter with sad impatience.

"At the end of a quarter of an hour David returned. Thanks to God, she was better; and she had desired to continue her watching and prayers in the church, consenting only to kneel upon a cushion. And as I resisted, and was indignant that the superior should have granted her request, adding that I formally opposed myself to it, he replied to me that it would have been dangerous to contradict the wishes of my daughter at a time when she was under the influence of a strong nervous emotion; and, besides, he had agreed with the Princess Juliana that the poor child should quit the church at the hour of matins to take a little repose, and prepare for the ceremony.

"She is now in church, then?" said I to him.

"Yes, my lord, but in half an hour she will have quitted it."

"I caused myself to be conducted to the north gallery, from which the whole choir of the church can be seen.

"There, in the midst of the darkness of this vast church, only illuminated by the pale light of the lamp from the chancel, I saw her near the grating on her knees; her hands joined, and praying with fervour.

"I also knelt, and thought of my child.

"Three o'clock struck; two sisters who were seated, but who had not moved their eyes from her, went and whispered to her. In a few moments she made a sign, got up, and crossed the church with a firm step—although, my friend, when she passed under the lamp, her countenance appeared to me as white as the long veil which floated around her.

"I also went out of the gallery, intending at first to go to meet her, but I feared a new emotion would prevent her from taking a few moments' repose. I sent David to learn how she was; he came back to tell me she felt better, and intended to try to sleep a little.

"I remain at the abbey, for the ceremony which will take place to-morrow.

"I think now, my friend, it is useless to send you this incomplete letter. I shall finish it to-morrow by relating the events of that sad day.

"Until then farewell, my friend. I am worn out with grief. Pity me."

CHAPTER LAST.

THE THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY.

Rosalie to Clémence.

"THIRTEENTH OF JANUARY—an anniversary now doubly dreadful!!!

"My friend, we are losing her forever!

"All is finished—all!

"Listen to the story!

"It is, then, true, there is an atrocious voluptuousness in relating a horrible grief.

"Yesterday I bewailed the chance which retained you away from me. To-day, Clémence, I congratulate myself that you are not here; you would suffer too much.

"This morning—I had hardly slept through the night—I was awakened by the sound of the bells; I groaned with terror; it seemed to me funeral, a funeral knell.

"In fact, my daughter is dead to us—dead: do you hear, Clémence, from this day you must begin to wear mourning for her in your heart—in your heart, so filled with maternal affection for her.

"Is our child buried under the marble of a tomb or under the vaults of a cloister—for us what is the difference?

"From this day, do you understand, Clémence, we must regard her as dead. Besides, she is so very weak; her health, impaired by so much sorrow, by so many shocks, is so feeble. Why not that other death, still more complete? Fate is not weary.

"And then, besides, after my letter of yesterday, you may understand that it would perhaps be more happy for her if she were dead.

"Dead! These four letters have a singular appearance, do you not think so? when one writes them in reference to an idolized daughter, a daughter so fair, so charming, of such angelic goodness, scarcely eighteen, and dead to the world!

"Indeed, for us and for her, why vegetate in suffering in the gloomy tranquillity of this cloister? Of what importance that she lives, if she is lost to us—she might have loved life so much—what a fatality has attended her!

"What I am saying is horrible: there is a barbarous egotism in paternal love.

"At noon her profession took place with solemn pomp.

"Hidden behind the curtains of our gallery, I was present at it.

"I felt, over again, but with still more intensity, all those poignant emotions which we suffered at her novitiate.

"A singular thing, she is adored: it is generally believed that she is drawn towards a religious life by an irresistible vocation; her profession might be looked upon as a happy event for her, and yet, on the contrary, an overpowering sadness weighs down the whole assembly.

"At the bottom of the church, among the people, I saw two under-officers of my guard, two old and rude soldiers, hold down their heads and weep.

"There seemed to be in the act a sad presentiment. If there was foundation for it, it has been but half realized.

"The profession terminated, our child was brought back into the hall of the chapter, where the nomination of the new abbess was to take place.

"Thanks to my privilege as sovereign, I went into this hall to await the return of Fleur de Marie.

"She soon entered.

"Her emotion, her weakness was so great, that two sisters supported her.

"I was alarmed, less even by her paleness and the deep alteration of her features than by the expression of her smile: it seemed to me marked by a sort of secret satisfaction.

"Clémence, I say it to you, perhaps soon we shall need all our courage—much courage—I feel, so to speak, *within me* that our child is struck with death!

"After all, her life would be so unhappy. Here is the second time that, in thinking the death of

my daughter possible, I have said that death would put an end to her cruel existence. This idea is a horrible symptom; but if sorrow must strike us, it is better to be prepared, is it not, Clémence?

"To prepare one's self for such a misfortune is to taste little by little beforehand that slow anguish—it is an unheard-of refinement of grief. It is a thousand times more dreadful than to have the blow fall unexpectedly; at least the stupor, the annihilation would spare one a part of this cutting anguish.

"But the customs of compassion prescribe to us a preparation. Probably I should never act otherwise myself, my poor friend, if I had to acquaint you with the sad event of which I speak to you. Thus be alarmed, if you observe that I speak to you of her with the delicacy, the caution of desperate sadness, after having announced to you that I do not feel serious inquietude respecting her health.

"Yes, be alarmed, if I speak to you as I am writing now, for though I left her, to finish this letter, an hour ago, in a tolerably calm state, I repeat it to you, Clémence, I seem to *feel within me* that she suffers more than she appears to do. Heaven grant that I deceive myself, and that I take for presentiments the despairing sadness which this melancholy ceremony inspires.

"Fleur de Marie then entered the large hall of the chapel.

"All the stalls were occupied by the nuns.

"She went modestly to take the lowest place on the left, supporting herself on the arm of one of the sisters, for she still seemed very weak.

"At the upper end of the hall the Princess Juliana was seated, the grand prioress beside her; on the other hand a second dignity, holding in her hand the golden cross, the symbol of the authority of the abbess.

"A profound silence prevailed. The princess arose, took her cross in her hand, and said, with a serious tone and an expression of much emotion,

"My dear daughters, my great age obliges me to confide to younger hands this emblem of my spiritual power, and she showed her cross. 'I am authorized to do it by a bull of our holy father; I will present, then, to the benediction of my Lord Archbishop of Oppenheim, and to the approbation of his royal highness the grand-duke, our sovereign, and to yours, my dear daughters, the one of your number whom you have designated to succeed me. Our grand prioress will make known to you the result of the election, and to the person whom you shall have elected I will deliver up my cross and ring.'

"I never moved my eyes from my daughter. Standing in her stall, her two hands crossed on her bosom, her eyes cast down, half enveloped in her white veil, and the long descending folds of her black robe, she remained immovable and thoughtful; she had never for a moment supposed that she could be chosen: her elevation had been only confided to me by the abbess.

"The grand prioress took a register and read:

"Each of our dear sisters having been, according to rule, invited, eight days since, to place their votes in the hands of our holy mother, and mutually to keep secret their choice until this moment, in the name of our holy mother, I declare, that one of you, my dear sisters, has, by her exemplary piety, by her evangelical virtues, merited the unanimous suffrage of the community; and this is our Sister Amelia, during her

lifetime the most high and puissant Princess of Gérolstein.

"At these words, a sort of murmur of sweet surprise and happy satisfaction passed round the hall; the looks of all the nuns were fixed upon my daughter, with an expression of tender sympathy. Notwithstanding my all-engrossing anxieties, I was myself deeply moved with this nomination, which, made separately and secretly, offered, nevertheless, a touching unanimity.

"Fleur de Marie, astounded, became still more pale; her knees trembled so much that she was obliged to support herself with one hand on the side of the stall.

"The abbess spoke again, with a very clear, but grave voice:

"My dear daughters, is it indeed Sister Amelia whom you consider most worthy and most deserving of all of you? Is it indeed she whom you acknowledge as your spiritual superior? Let each of you in turn answer me, my dear daughters."

"And each nun answered, in a loud tone,

"I have voluntarily and freely chosen, and I do choose Sister Amelia for my holy mother and superior."

"Overpowered with an inexpressible emotion, my poor child fell on her knees, joined her hands, and so remained till every vote was given.

"Then the abbess, placing the cross and ring in the hands of the grand prioress, advanced towards my daughter, to take her by the hand and lead her to the seat of the abbess.

"My friend, my tender friend, I have interrupted myself a moment. I must take courage and finish the relation of this heart-rending scene.

"Raise yourself, my dear daughter," said the abbess to her; "come to take the place which belongs to you; your evangelical virtues, and not your rank, have gained it for you."

"Saying these words, the venerable princess bent towards my daughter to assist her to rise.

"Fleur de Marie took a few trembling steps, then arriving in the middle of the hall of the chapter, she stopped and said, with a voice the calmness and firmness of which astonished me,

"Pardon me, holy mother, I would speak to my sisters."

"Ascend first, my dear daughter, your seat as abbess," said the princess; "it is from thence that you must let them hear your voice."

"That place, holy mother, cannot be mine," replied Fleur de Marie, with a low and trembling voice.

"What do you say, my dear daughter?"

"Such a high dignity is not made for me, holy mother."

"But the voices of all your sisters call you to it."

"Permit me, holy mother, to make here on my knees a solemn confession; my sisters will see, and you also, holy mother, that the most humble condition is not humble enough for me."

"Your modesty misleads you, my dear daughter," said the superior, with kindness, believing, in fact, that the unfortunate child was yielding to a feeling of exaggerated modesty; but I, divined those confessions which Fleur de Marie was about to make. Seized with horror, I cried out with a supplicating voice,

"My child, I conjure you—"

"At these words, to tell you, my friend, all that I read in the profound look which Fleur de

Marie cast upon me, would be impossible. As you will see directly, she had understood me—yes, she had understood that I should partake in the shame of this horrible revelation: she understood that, after such a revelation, I might be accused of falsehood, for I had always left it to be believed that Fleur de Marie had never left her mother.

"At this thought the poor child believed herself guilty of the blackest ingratitude towards me. She had not strength to go on—she was silent, and held down her head from exhaustion.

"Yet once again, my dear daughter," resumed the abbess, "your modesty deceives you; the unanimity of your sisters' choice proves to you how worthy you are to take my place. If you have taken part in the pleasures of the world, your renouncing these pleasures is but the more meritorious. It is not her Royal Highness Princess Amelia who is chosen—it is *Sister Amelia*. For us, your life began when you entered this house of the Lord, and it is this example and holy life which we recompense. I say to you, moreover, my dear daughter, that if before entering this retreat your life had been as guilty as it has been, on the contrary, pure and praiseworthy, that the angelic virtues of which you have given us the example since your abode here would expiate and redeem, in the eyes of the Lord, any past life, however guilty it may have been. After this, my daughter, judge if your modesty ought not to be assured."

"These words of the abbess were the more precious to Fleur de Marie, inasmuch as she believed the past ineffaceable. Unfortunately, this scene had deeply distressed her, and though she affected calmness and firmness, it seemed to me that her countenance changed in an alarming manner. Twice she groaned as she passed her poor emaciated hand over her forehead.

"I think I have convinced you, my dear daughter," resumed the Princess Juliana, "and you would not cause your sisters a severe pain by refusing this mark of their confidence and their affection."

"No, holy mother," said she, with an expression which struck me, and with a voice becoming weaker and weaker, "I now think I may accept it. But as I feel greatly fatigued and somewhat ill, if you will permit it, holy mother, the ceremony of my consecration shall not take place for a few days."

"It shall be as you desire, my dear daughter; but while we wait till your office shall be blessed and consecrated, take this ring: come to your place; our dear sisters will render you their homage, according to the rules."

"I saw at every moment her emotion increasing, her countenance changing more and more; finally, this scene was beyond her strength; she fainted before the procession of the sisters was finished.

"Judge of my terror; we carried her into the apartment of the abbess.

"David had not left the convent; he hastened and bestowed the first cares upon her. Oh that he may not have deceived me; he assures me that this new accident was caused only by extreme weakness occasioned by the fastings, the fatigues, and the privation of sleep which my daughter has imposed upon herself during her novitiate.

"I believed him, because, in fact, her angelic features, though of a frightful paleness, did not betray any suffering; when she recovered her

consciousness, I was even struck with the serenity which shone on her forehead. It seems to me that she was concealing the secret hope of an approaching deliverance.

"The superior having returned to the chapter to close the session, I remained alone with my daughter.

"My good father, can you forget my ingratitude? Can you forget that, at the moment I was about to make this painful confession, you asked me to spare you!"

"Oh! do not speak of it, I supplicate you." And I had not dreamed, continued she, with bitterness, 'that in saying, in the face of all, from what an abyss of degradation you had drawn me, I was revealing a secret that you had kept out of tenderness to me; it was to accuse you publicly, you, my father, of a dissimulation to which you had resigned yourself only to secure to me a brilliant and honoured existence. Oh! can you pardon me?"

"Instead of answering her, I pressed my lips upon her forehead; she felt my tears flow.

"After having kissed my hands several times, she said to me,

"Now I feel better, my good father, now that I am, as our rules say, here, and dead to the world. I should wish to make some dispositions in favour of several persons, but, as all I possess is yours, will you authorize me, my good father?"

"Can you doubt it? but I beseech you," said I to her, 'do not indulge these sad thoughts; by-and-by you shall employ yourself in this duty; you have time enough.'

"Undoubtedly, my good father, I have yet much time to live," added she, with an accent that, I know not why, made me shudder. I looked at her more attentively; but no change in her features justified my uneasiness. 'Yes, I have yet much time to live,' resumed she, 'but I must not occupy myself longer with terrestrial things, for to-day I renounce all which attached me to the world. I beseech you, do not refuse me.'

"Direct me: I will do everything you wish."

"I should wish that my tender mother would always keep in the little back parlour where she usually sits, my embroidery frame, with the tapestry I have begun in it."

"Your wishes shall be fulfilled, my child: your room has remained exactly as it was the day you left the palace; for everything belonging to you is an object of religious worship to us. Clemence will be deeply touched at your remembrance of her."

"As to you, my good father, take, I beg you, my large ebony chair, in which I have thought, have dreamed so much."

"It shall be placed by the side of mine in my working cabinet, and I shall see you in it every day, seated beside me, as you so often used to sit." Could I tell her this, and restrain my tears?

"Now I should wish to leave some memorials of me to those who took so much interest in me when I was unfortunate. To Madame Georges I should like to give my writing-desk, of which I have lately made use. This gift will be appropriate," added she, with a sweet smile, 'for it was she at the farm who began to teach me to write. As to the venerable curate of Bouqueval, who instructed me in religion, I destine for him the beautiful Christ in my oratory."

"Good, my child."

"I should like to send my bandeau of pearls

to my good little Rigoleuse. It is a simple ornament that she can wear on her beautiful black hair; and then, if it were possible, since you know where Martial and La Louve are, in Algiers, I should wish that this courageous woman, who saved my life, should have my enamelled cross. These different pledges of remembrance, my good father, I should wish to have sent to them from *Fleur de Marie*."

"I will execute your wishes; have you forgotten no one?"

"I believe not, my good father."

"Think carefully: among those who love you, is there not some one very unhappy—as unhappy as your mother and myself; some one, finally, who regrets as deeply as we do your entrance into the convent?"

"The poor child understood me; she pressed my hand; a slight blush coloured for a moment her pale face.

"Anticipating a question which she feared, undoubtedly, to ask me, I said to her, 'He is better; they no longer fear for his life.'

"And his father?"

"He feels the improvement in the health of his son—he, too, is better. And to Henry, what will you give him? A remembrance from you will be such a dear, such a precious consolation to him."

"My father, offer him my *prie-dieu*. Alas! I have often watered it with my tears, in begging of Heaven strength to forget Henry, since I was not worthy of his love."

"How happy he will be to see that you had a thought for him!"

"The house of asylum for orphans and young women abandoned by their relations, I should desire, my good father—"

Here Rodolphe's letter was interrupted by the following words, which were almost illegible.

"Clemence, Murphy will finish this letter: I have no longer any mind—I am distracted. Ah, the thirteenth of January!!"

The conclusion of this letter, in the handwriting of Murphy, was thus conceived,

"MADAM—In obedience to the orders of his royal highness, I complete this sad recital. The two letters of my lord must have prepared your royal highness for the overwhelming news which it remains to me to acquaint you with.

"It was three o'clock; my lord was employed in writing to your royal highness; I was waiting in a neighbouring apartment until he should give me the letter, to forward it immediately by a courier. Suddenly I saw the Princess Juliana enter with an air of consternation. 'Where is his royal highness?' said she to me with a voice filled with emotion. 'Princess, my lord is writing to the grand-duchess the news of the day.' 'Sir Walter, you must inform my lord—a terrible event. You are his friend, be so kind as to inform him; from you the blow will be less terrible.'

"I understood everything: I thought it more prudent to take this sad revelation upon myself, the superior having added that the Princess Amelia was slowly sinking away, and that my lord must hasten to receive the last sighs of his daughter. I unfortunately had not time to take any precautions. I entered the saloon; his royal highness perceived my paleness. 'You have come to acquaint me of some misfortune.' 'An irreparable misfortune, my lord—courage.' 'Ah,

my presentiments,' cried he, and, without adding a word, he ran to the cloister. I followed him.

"From the apartment of the superior, the Princess Amelia had been transported into her cell after her last interview with my lord. One of the sisters was watching by her; at the end of an hour she perceived that the voice of the Princess Amelia, who spoke to her at intervals, was becoming weaker, and that she was more distressed. The sister hastened to inform the superior; Doctor David was called; he hoped to remedy this new loss of strength by a cordial, but it was in vain; the pulse was scarcely perceptible; he saw, with despair, that reiterated emotions had probably exhausted the strength of the Princess Amelia; there remained no hope of saving her.

"It was then that my lord arrived. Princess Amelia had just received the last sacrament: a ray of intelligence still lingered about her; in one of her hands, crossed on her bosom, was the remains of her little rosebush.

"My lord fell on his knees by her pillow: he sobbed, 'My daughter, my beloved child,' cried he, in a heart-rending tone.

"The Princess Amelia heard him, turned her head gently towards him, opened her eyes, endeavoured to smile, and said, with a feeble voice,

"My good father, pardon—Henry also—my good mother—pardon."

"These were her last words!

"After an hour of silent agony, she gave up her spirit to God.

"When his daughter had yielded up her last sigh, my lord did not say a word; his calmness was frightful; he closed the eyes of the princess, kissed her forehead again and again, took piously the remains of the little rosebush, and left the cell.

"I followed him; he returned to the house without the cloister, and showing me the letter that he had begun to write to your royal highness, and to which he in vain attempted to add some words, for his hand trembled convulsively, he said to me,

"It is impossible for me to write. I am annihilated, my mind is gone. Write to the grand-duchess that I no longer have a daughter!"

"I have executed the orders of my lord.

"Permit me, as his oldest servant, to beseech your royal highness to hasten your return as soon as the health of the Count d'Orbigny will permit it. The presence of your royal highness alone can calm the despair of the prince. He wishes to watch every night by his daughter till the day when she will be buried in the grand-ducal chapel.

"I have accomplished my sad task, madam: be so kind as to excuse the incoherence of this letter, and accept the expression of respectful devotion with which I have the honour to be your royal highness's very obedient servant,

"WALTER MURPHY."

* * * * *

The night before the funeral service of the Princess Amelia, Clémence arrived at Gérolstein with her father.

Rodolphe was not alone the day of the funeral of Fleur de Marie.

number of the *Mysteries of Paris*, in that journal: "To the Editor."

"Sir—The *Mysteries of Paris* is finished; permit me publicly to thank you for having lent to this work, unfortunately as imperfect as incomplete, the great and powerful publicity of the *Journal des Débats*; my gratitude is the more ardent, sir, as several of the ideas put forth in this work differ essentially from those which you sustain with as much energy as talent, and because it is rare to meet with the courageous and loyal impartiality you have given proof of with regard to me.

"I invoke again this impartiality, sir, to say some words to you in favour of a modest publication, founded, and exclusively carried on by labourers under the title of the *POPULAR HIVE*. Some honest and enlightened artisans have raised this popular tribunal, where they expose their claims with as much propriety as moderation (I refer, among others, to a very touching letter addressed to the king by M. Duquesne, journeyman printer). The organization of labour, the limitation of rivalry, the tariff of salaries, are treated of in it by labourers themselves; and in this respect their voice, it seems to me, deserves to be heard attentively by all those who are engaged in public affairs.

"But, unfortunately, many years will, perhaps, pass before these great questions, of such vital interest for the masses, will be solved. Meantime, every day brings forward and unveils new miseries, new individual sufferings. The founders of the *HIVE* have hoped that in making every month an appeal in favour of their unfortunate brethren, they shall, perhaps, be listened to by the more fortunate part of the world.

"Permit me, sir, to quote for you the first page of the *Popular Hive*.

" "To assist the honourably unfortunate who complain, is good. To inquire out those who struggle with honour, with energy, and to come to their assistance sometimes unknown to them, to prevent in time the misery or the temptations which lead to crime, this is better."—*Rodolphe, in the Mysteries of Paris*.

"If, in our conviction, the people can be delivered or assisted efficaciously only by measures legislatively arranged, this is no reason for us to despise or to repulse blindly gifts offered with delicacy.

"The part which M. Eugene Sue makes Rodolphe fill in the *Mysteries of Paris*, having inspired us with the idea of inquiring into the circumstances of honest and unfortunate families, and who under these titles are worthy of evangelical brotherhood, we make to the friends of humanity a pious appeal, for a benefit is sufficient sometimes to turn away a misfortune, to save from misery, from despair, from crime, perhaps, a family deprived of everything; and if charities are degrading, what we advise principally will be to procure work and places sufficiently well paid, in order that every one may be placed beyond terrible necessity.

"We have relieved several interesting and distressed families: benefactors may apply to the office of the *HIVE*, where they may learn the address of the sufferers, in order that they may in person administer their gifts.

"We quote, among others, a family composed of father, mother, and four children, the oldest six years. They have in vain solicited employment which would support them, but they have not been able to obtain it for the very reason which ought to have excited the greatest interest for them—because they had a numerous family.

"Another of these families had just lost its head, an honest painter, who, while at work, fell from the fourth story of a house. He left a wife and several young children in the most profound grief and greatest destitution."

"I take pleasure, I confess it to you, sir, in quoting this page, where my name is mentioned in such a flattering manner, for I shall regard myself always recompensed beyond my hopes, whenever I feel I have inspired by my writings, any generous action or charitable thought, and the idea put in execution by the founders of the

The following letter, addressed to the editor of the *Journal des Débats*, is affixed to the last

Popular Hive seems to be of the number of these.

"Thus, rich persons who wish to subscribe to this monthly journal, sixteen francs per year (at the office of the Hive, Rue de Quatre Fils, No. 17 au Marais), will be every month informed of some respectable and unfortunate person whom it will, perhaps, be agreeable to them to relieve, for, we say it aloud, there is generally in France much commiseration for the suffering, but very often the occasion is wanting to exercise charity in a manner profitable to the heart, and, if it may be so said, in an *interesting* way. In this respect, the Popular Hive will offer valuable information to those chosen spirits who are seeking out pure and noble sources of enjoyment."

"One last word, sir: as you deserve one half of the credit of my work, from the immense publicity you have given it, I can inform you of a result at which you will congratulate yourself, I hope, as I do. I have received letters from Bordeaux and Lyons, from several rich and compassionate persons, who are employed in realizing, in those two cities, my project of a bank of *gratuitous loans for labourers out of employment*, and one who makes here the most generous and

most enlightened use of an immense fortune, has given me, on the subject of a similar institution in Paris, the most encouraging hopes.

"We have now only to wish, sir, that some legislator, a true friend of the people, will take in hand the following questions:

"The supplying advocates for the poor.

"The lowering the immense rates of interest claimed by the Monte de Piete (a legalized pawn-broking establishment which has a monopoly of the business).

"A protecting guardianship, to be exercised by the state over the children of persons condemned to capital punishment or imprisonment for life.

"To the reform of the penal code, relating to abuses of trust.

"And, perhaps, this book, which has been recently attacked with so much bitterness and violence, may have at least produced some good results.

"Be pleased, sir, to accept the expression of my lively gratitude, and the assurance of my most devoted sentiments.

"EUGENE SWE.

"Paris, October 15, 1848."

THE END

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